



Old Testament reading – Isaiah 1:1-20 – New Testament Reading – Jude 1:17-25

Spiritual Warfare: Fighting the Good Fight “Rejoice in Victory” 2 Timothy 4:1-8

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The Apostle Paul is considered the greatest missionary of all time.

- During his 30-years of ministry, Paul and his companions made as many as five missionary journeys, planted churches in more than a dozen different countries, and in his spare time, Paul wrote 13 of the books/letters in the New Testament.
- Before his conversion to Christ around A.D. 33-34, Paul's name was Saul, a persecutor of Christians, one who was responsible for the martyrdom of many of those who were the first to believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- After his conversion, Paul was responsible for the spread of the gospel to what was then the known world, and therefore for the salvation of many thousands who expressed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- At the close of such a remarkable ministry, one would think Paul would have been recognized and honored for his dedication to his calling, and perhaps, provided a place to rest from his labors.

- However, the greatest missionary of all time spent the last days of his life in the dark and damp dungeon of a Roman prison and attached at the ankle to a Roman guard.
- The Apostle Paul gave us a perfect example of what it means to be totally abandoned to Christ, a foreign concept among the majority of Christians today. Philippians 3:7-8

Paul knew his ministry was over, and the hour of his death was near. However, his main concern was to encourage Timothy to stand firm in the faith, regardless of the circumstances of his life or the consequences of his decisions. Paul reminded Timothy of his own testimony.

- *"I have fought the good fight!"* –
 - Internally, Paul battled with the world, the flesh, and the devil, just as every Christian will.
 - Externally, Paul battled with those who were enemies of the gospel. He "contended for the faith once delivered to the saints."
- *"I have finished the race!"* –
 - Paul's assignment was to get the gospel to the Gentiles, and he had traveled over 10,000 miles on land and sea to accomplish his mission.
- *"I have kept the faith!"* –
 - Paul had preached the gospel in all kinds of places and before all kinds of people, and he had suffered physical dangers as well as personal disgraces in doing so.
 - Paul said, through it all, he had "kept" the faith. He had lived a life of fidelity to the gospel.
 - Therefore, he could face his date with death with a great sense of fulfillment and accomplishment, knowing he had not only finished the work God had called him to do, but he had finished well.
- Because of his faithfulness to his calling, as well as to the One who had called him, and because of his fidelity to the gospel God had entrusted to him, Paul said a "crown of righteousness" had been reserved for him, and the Lord Jesus Himself would give it to him.
- The crown of righteousness is one of five crowns to be issued to the followers of Christ on the day we stand before Him:
 - The imperishable crown – 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 – to be given to those who run their race according to the rules.
 - The crown of rejoicing – 1 Thessalonians 2:19 – God Himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes.
 - The crown of righteousness – 2 Timothy 4:8 – to be given to those dressed in the righteousness of Christ alone.
 - The crown of glory – 1 Peter 5:4 – to be given to those who longed for the Lord's return.

- The crown of life – Revelation 2:10 – to be given to those who remained faithful to Christ, even in the midst of great suffering and martyrdom.

God wants His people to enjoy the good things He has created, but there is a love for the world that is incompatible with the victorious Christian life, and therein lies the basis for our spiritual warfare.

1. Spiritual Warfare Defined – Ephesians 6:10-12 – *“We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

- The spiritual warfare we face is not a physical war or even an earthly war between believers and unbelievers in positions of worldly power and influence.
- The spiritual warfare in which we are engaged is a cosmic war between God and Satan, between God’s truth and Satan’s lies, between the Kingdom of light and the Kingdom of darkness.
- Spiritual warfare is Satan’s opposition to God’s position, God’s purposes, God’s promises, and God’s power, and that battle often manifests itself in our daily lives.

2. Spiritual Weapons Defined –

- 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 – *“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.”*
- **Spiritual warfare cannot be fought with carnal or fleshly weapons,**
 - In this context, Paul was referring to the tactics or methods of warfare, rather than actual implements.
 - The Greek word used for “flesh” is also translated as “sensual,” or that which is controlled by our human nature, rather than the Spirit of God.
 - Apart from the power of God, all our energies combined are to no avail against the power of darkness that now pervades; they are counter-productive to our goal of proving the power of God is greater than Satan.
- **Spiritual warfare is Satan’s lies against the knowledge of God.**
 - When Satan came to Eve in the Garden of Eden, he asked her, *“Hath God really said you shall not eat of every tree in the garden.”*
 - His goal was to get Eve and then Adam to doubt God’s Word.
 - Satan is asking the same question today on a variety of issues, but sadly, the contemporary church is unable to counter his lies with the truth of God’s Word.
- Ephesians 6:13-18 – *“Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.”*

- **The belt of truth** – Christians must be girded with the truth of God's Word regarding the essential doctrines of our faith.
- **The breastplate of righteousness** – the righteousness of Christ that was imputed to us, guards our heart against Satan's false accusations.
- **Feet shod with the gospel** – if we are to tread on the enemy's territory, we need to be prepared for Satan's traps along the trail.
- **The shield of faith** – protects us from the fiery darts the devil sends to cause us to doubt the faithfulness of God and the finished work of Christ.
- **The helmet of salvation** – the spiritual warfare we face begins in our minds. This is where our concept of God is most important and where the assurance of our salvation is absolutely essential.
- **The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God** – this is our ONLY offensive weapon. Even though Jesus was God of very God, He quoted the precise verses of scripture that countered Satan's lies.
- Praying always in the Holy Spirit – prayer is the means whereby we receive the spiritual strength to use these tools and to be victorious over Satan's attacks and temptations.

3. Spiritual Victory Defined –

- 1 Corinthians 15:57 – *"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*
- 1 John 5:4 – *"Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith."*
 - The heart cry of every Christian is to be able to live above the draw of the world, the desires of the flesh, and the deceit of the devil.
 - However, such a victorious Christian life is not possible through self-discipline, submissive devotion, or sheer determination.
 - The victorious Christian life is one that is fully surrendered unto God, with Christ received not only as Savior but submitted unto as Lord. Galatians 2:20
 - The victorious Christian life is intended for every born-again believer who will:
 - **Forsake the world** – death to self but alive in Christ.
 - **Follow Christ** – devotion to Christ as His disciple.
 - **Finish their assignment** – discipleship of those who will disciple others. 2 Timothy 2:2