

Keeping The Faith When Fighting Against Evil

"I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. What awaits me now is the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge will give to me on Judgement Day, and not to me only but to all those who have loved Him and longed for Him to appear" (2 Timothy 4:7 & 8).

Apostle Paul's fight was not only against severe persecution, he also had to deal with the devil and invisible evil cohorts that were trying to stop Paul's amazing evangelism. The battle or fight we have to endure is not against people, it is against the forces of darkness attempting to stop us from sharing the Gospel message and leading others to Jesus and thus the salvation of souls. Jesus did not come to save flesh and blood bodies on earth, He came to save souls of mankind for eternity in the Kingdom of God. 'This instruction I commit to you ... wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience which some people have thrust away, making a shipwreck concerning their faith' (1 Timothy 1:18 & 19). The battle we fight is for the unsaved soul. Flesh and blood cannot enter heaven (1 Corinthians 15:50). Every person will live forever in the spirit/soul but we are the ones who choose our eternal destiny, whether our soul will spend eternity with God or with the devil.

We need to put on spiritual armour just as if we are going to wage war because we are in a spiritual battle. 'Put on the whole armour of God so you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Our (spiritual) wrestling is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities, against the wicked powers, against the world's rulers of the darkness of this age and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on the whole armour of God so you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all you can, to stand steadfast. Stand therefore, having the utility belt of truth buckled around your waist and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, plus having fitted your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, above all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the spoken Word of God' (Ephesians 6:11 to 17).

Our struggle, battle and fight is not between us and the devil, it is between God and the devil and we just happen to be on God's side so we have difficulties in life caused by wickedness. The battle is over the souls of humanity (James 1:21) and to fight evil we need the weapons of spiritual warfare. 'Though we walk in the flesh we do not wage war according to the flesh for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the throwing down of (spiritual) strongholds, throwing down evil imaginations and every high wicked thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Jesus' (2 Corinthians 10:3 to 5). We are fighters and if we are to be effective in our warfare we will need our spiritual weapons as FIGHTERS ...

F is for faith, the shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16).

I is for intercession and prayer, lifting holy hands (1 Timothy 2:8).

G is for God's spoken Word, which is the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17).

H is for humility in which we are to be clothed (Colossians 3:12).

T is for truth, the utility belt of truth (Ephesians 6:14).

E is for evangelism, spreading the Gospel of Peace (Ephesians 6:15).

R is for righteousness, the breastplate of righteousness (Ephesians 6:14).

S is for standing strong, steadfastness and salvation, the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:11 & 17).

Faith is believing God even when we do not see an answer to prayer. We all need the shield of faith. 'Faith is assurance of things hoped for, proof of things not seen ... By faith, Noah being warned about things not yet seen, moved with Godly fear and prepared a ship for the saving of his household' (Hebrews 11:1 & 7). We need to have faith in God even when He does not answer our specific prayers because we must love Him for Who He is, not what He can do for us (John 6:2 & 26). When we love God for Who He is, we receive great eternal blessings. 'They died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them and embraced them from afar, having confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Those who say such things make it clear they are seeking a country (place in heaven) of their own. If indeed they had been thinking of that country from which they went out they would have had enough time to return. But now they desire a better country, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for He has prepared a city for them ... These all, having had testimony given to them through their faith, did not receive the promise' (Hebrews 11:13 to 16 & 39). Jesus said, "Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1 & 2). God has given us spiritual salvation and hope so what more can He do for us? Anything else is earthly. 'Since we belong to the day let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation' (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Faith is obeying God even when we do not understand what He is doing. 'By faith, when Abraham was called, he obeyed

God to go out to the place he was to receive for an inheritance. He went out not knowing where he was going' (Hebrews 11:8).

Intercessory prayer begins with the Holy Spirit. 'The Holy Spirit helps our weaknesses, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Holy Spirit Himself makes intercession on our behalf with utterings that are too deep for words. The Lord Who searches the hearts knows what is on the Holy Spirit's mind because He makes intercession for believers according to God's will' (Romans 8:26 & 27). Jesus also makes constant intercession for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). We are to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17) which means we should not give up if an answer does not come within our timeframe. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective (James 5:16). Intercessory prayer should be accompanied with anticipation and a thankful attitude. 'Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching (for the answer) with thanksgiving' (Colossians 4:2). When the Jewish nation was under threat from the wicked Haman, Esther interceded for her people and won (study the entire Book of Esther).

God's spoken Word created everything that exists. Without God's Word, we would not exist. "Worthy are You our Lord and God, the Holy One, to receive the glory, the honour and the power, for You created all things, and because of your will and desire they exist and were created" (Revelation 4:11). We need to study and spiritually 'devour' the Bible, the Word of God and 'implant' it into our soul. 'Receive with humility the implanted Word which is able to save your souls' (James 1:21). The Bible is our manual for life, revealing God's will for all humanity, to teach us about creation and where everything came from, spoken out by the breath of God. 'Every Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and for instruction in righteousness so every believer in God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Timothy 3:16 & 17). When we are tempted by evil we have the authority in God to quote the Scriptures like Jesus did, starting with the words, "It is written ... " (Matthew 4:4, 7 & 10; 1 John 2:14). 'The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow and is able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart. There is no creature that is hidden from God's sight but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do' (Hebrews 4:12 & 13). 'God has made my mouth like a sharp sword. In the shadow of His hand He has hidden me and He has made me a polished arrow and in His quiver He has kept me close' (Isaiah 49:2).

Humility is opposite of pride (James 4:6). We are called to humble ourselves before God (Ezra 8:21; Daniel 10:12). Manasseh humbled himself greatly before the Lord (2 Chronicles 33:12). Moses was the most humble man on earth (Numbers 12:3). God said, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal them" (2 Chronicles 7:14). 'What does God require of you but to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God?' (Micah 6:8). 'Yes, all of you clothe yourselves with humility, subject yourselves to one another for, "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God so he may exalt you in due time' (James 4:6 & 10; 1 Peter 5:5 & 6). 'Have this in your mind, which was also in Jesus, Who existing in the form of God did not consider equality with God a thing to be proud of but He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and being in human form, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to death, yes the death of the cross. Therefore God highly exalted Him and gave to Him the Name which is above every Name so at the Name of Jesus/Yeshua every knee will bow, of those in heaven, those on earth and those under the earth (the souls of people who have died) and every tongue will confess, Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father' (Philippians 2:5 to 11).

Truth sets us free. Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). God has great joy when we walk in His truth. "I have no greater joy than this, to hear about My children walking in truth" (3 John 1:4). We all need the utility belt of truth to protect us from shame and to stop spiritual weapons being used against us. God said, "No weapon formed against you can prosper and you will condemn every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their righteousness which is of Me" (Isaiah 54:17). 'Be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man (honest attitudes, good behaviour) who in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth, therefore put away falsehood, speak truth each one with his neighbour' (Ephesians 4:23 to 25). The Bible is the only true Book of Truth.

Evangelism is a mandate given to all believers. We do not have the choice. We must spread the Gospel message of peace and salvation even under duress. The early church was persecuted even before Jesus initiated it. There were attempts on the life of Jesus when He was a tiny Baby (Matthew 2:13), there were several attempts on His life during His ministry (John 5:16). Herod, Saul, Pharisees and the Romans all persecuted the early church, yet in spite of the terrible consequences of persecution, the early church grew immensely until the entire known world had heard the Gospel (Romans 1:8) through the unrelenting gift of

evangelism. Salvation is our choice, but for us to make that choice we first have to hear the Gospel message of salvation. 'Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. How will they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him Whom they have not heard? How will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of Peace, who bring glad tidings of good things," but faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God' (Romans 10:13 to 15 & 17). 'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them who bring good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, Your God reigns' (Isaiah 52:7). Jesus said, "Go out into the entire world and preach the Gospel to every person" (Mark 16:15).

Righteousness delivers us from eternal death (Proverbs 10:2). The reference to the breastplate of righteousness was spoken with the Roman soldier's armour in mind. The breastplate of armour covered the soldier from his neck, front and back, both sides, down to his thighs and down both arms to the wrists. It would have been very heavy because a proper breastplate was made of mail, layers of small chain links to stop an arrow from penetrating the body. The breastplate of righteousness protects us, sustains us, guards us and stops spiritual attacks from the enemy (Proverbs 13:6). 'Since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet, the hope of salvation' (1 Thessalonians 5:8). 'He (our Redeemer) put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head. He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and was clad with zeal as a mantle' (Isaiah 59:17).

Standing firm or being steadfast and spreading the Gospel message of salvation is something only the zealous, strong and committed can do with effect. Again we quote Isaiah 59:17. Jesus was filled with zeal because He knew how important His mission was. In this context, the mantle is something that was passed on to a successor but it had to willingly be accepted. Elijah gave Elisha his mantle and Elisha willingly accepted it. 'Elijah departed there and found Elisha ... and Elijah passed over to him and cast his mantle on him' (1 Kings 19:19). 'Elisha took up the mantle of Elijah' (2 Kings 2:13). Jesus willingly took up the mantle the Father had put on His shoulders. He steadfastly kept strictly to the mission God had given Him without wavering or cowering. 'When the days were near for Jesus to be taken up (crucified) He intently set His face to go to Jerusalem and sent messengers before His face. They went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to prepare for Him but they did not receive Him because he was travelling with His face set towards Jerusalem' (Luke 9:51 to 53). We are to do the same with the same zeal. 'Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the Lord's work because you know your labour is not in vain in the Lord' (1 Corinthians 15:58). We are to do the work of the Lord and do exactly what God tells us to do and say, so He can achieve His works through us in the same way He achieved our salvation through the blood and cross of Jesus. When Jesus lives in us and we obey His commands, we are achieving what God's will is for this earth. God does His work through us. Jesus said, "I spoke not from Myself but the Father Who sent Me. He gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. I know His commandment is eternal life. The things I speak are as the Father has said to Me, so I speak ... The words I tell you, I speak not from Myself but the Father Who lives in Me does His works through Me" (John 12:49 & 50; 14:10).

Amen and God bless you.

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