

THE GOOD FIGHT

Fight the good fight of faith. (II Timothy 6:12)

When I was a boy there was nothing I loved more than playing army. While my sisters stayed inside having tea parties with their dollies, I was outside blowing things up, shooting enemy troops and saving the world (all in my imagination, of course). Any stick was a potential gun and any clod of dirt or pine cone a hand grenade. With the help of other boys in the neighborhood, I dug a foxhole in our backyard. In the safety of this fortress, we made plans and devised strategies. Then, when the signal was given, we would leap from the trenches, run forth onto the field of battle, performing heroic deeds of valor and courage.

Some psychologists would suggest that boys who play war games like this suffer from some pathological disorder and need therapeutic attention. I beg to differ. The God who created us in his image *is a man of war* (Exodus 15:3). The desire to fight is part of our spiritual DNA. It is true that conflict is often harmful. When God is absent, the results are usually tragic. We fight for the wrong reasons, in the wrong battles, on the wrong sides, with the wrong weapons. However, things change dramatically when we invite Christ to be Lord of our lives. We don't cease to fight. Rather, we learn to fight rightly. The Lord does not want to eliminate our warrior tendencies. He wants to sanctify them! According to the Bible, there are at least three things a Christian soldier needs to know:

KNOW YOUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. Which side are you on? In warfare, no decision is more basic than this. Until we acknowledge Jesus as Lord, we may not even be aware of the battle going on around us. But knowing him enables us to see clearly the issues that are at stake, the participants in the conflict and the choice that we are called upon to make. The real question is not whether or not Jesus is on my side but whether I am on his! (Joshua 5:13-15)

KNOW YOUR ENEMY. Our enemy is shrewd in his tactics and ingenious in his disguises (II Corinthians 11:14). Although our conflicts are often focused upon people and groups, we must remember who the real adversary is. *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against... the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).*

KNOW YOUR WEAPONS. To fight spiritual battles with worldly weapons only makes the situation worse. We need spiritual arms for the battles God is calling us to fight (II Corinthians 10:3-4). Paul enumerates the Christian's armor in Ephesians 6:13-18: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the Word of God). Finally, pray! In God's battle we arm ourselves and go forth to fight so that we can stand and pray!

There is a battle going on. The destiny of the world is hanging in the balance. General Jesus has sounded the call to arms. So put away your dollies and tea sets and take up your weapons. You and I are needed at the front. I hope to see you there!

Pastor Stan