

## Winning the Warfare (From the “Winning” series, part 3 of 3)

Eph. 6: 10-18

I Tim. 1: 18-19

II Tim. 2: 3-4

One of our greatest challenges individually and collectively as the Church is to discern the difference between spiritual warfare and natural opposition. Our struggle is not primarily personal, social and political conflicts.

Paul emphasizes that our battle is not against flesh and blood. If we don't understand this, we end up fighting the wrong enemy. We fight against people rather than the spiritual wickedness that controls people, creates false ideologies, and operates in systems of evil.

In understanding spiritual warfare, there are three basic truths we must know first and foremost:

1. Jesus has already won the victory.

He triumphed at Calvary. He spoiled principalities and powers (Eph. 1: 20-22; Col. 2:15).

2. We are victorious in Him.

God raised us up together with Christ, and set us at His right hand above all principality and power (Eph. 1:19-23; 2:6). We have the victory. We therefore fight from the victory already purchased with His blood and confirmed by His resurrection (Matt. 28:18).

3. His Church is advancing today.

The gates of hell cannot prevail (Matt. 16:18-19). Our victory on earth is certain. God is completing the work of calling out a people for His name and preparing us as His bride (Acts. 15: 14-17; Eph. 5:25-27, Rev. 21:2).

We are told in Ephesians 6 that we have been given a complete suit of armor, offensive as well as defensive. It is full armor, which is repeated (v. 11, 13). The devil tries to attack us on multiple fronts, but we are to stand our ground. We stand not in our own strength, but in the Lord's power (v. 10).

As we stand our ground, we are to use God's word as an offensive weapon against the devil and his host, just as Jesus used it against the devil in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11).

We see in First Timothy that the war is to be waged on two fronts, doctrinal and moral ("faith and a good conscience," I Tim. 1:19). It's what we believe and how we live. Both are under assault and we are to overcome every attack.

We are to expect and endure hardships as a good soldier. We endure them with joy, knowing we will reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12).

Finally, being a good and successful soldier requires sacrifice, discipline, obedience and loyalty. We cannot be entangled in the affairs of this life (2:4). We know when we are entangled when the world distracts us and diverts us from pleasing and serving God, who chose us and enlisted us.