

Challenges of Spiritual Warfare

1 Tim. 1:18-20

“This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which led the way to thee, that by them thou mayest war the good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I delivered unto Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme.”

The idea of warfare is not pleasant. The thought of warfare suggests thoughts of loss of life. To engage in warfare places the soldier in danger. All these thoughts should be at the forefront of any soldier's thoughts.

The apostle Paul's admonitions to Timothy were laced with the unpleasantness, loss, and danger of the battles associated with facing the wiles of the devil. Paul encouraged Timothy to approach his work with soberness, i.e., “But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim. 4:5). The hardships to which Paul referred to were mirrored through the eyes of a soldier, a man engaged in Grecian games, and a husbandman (tiller of the ground) as he may apply his training: “Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything” (2 Tim. 2:3-7).

Whether a soldier, athlete, or farmer, every engagement involves risks: The soldier who faces hand-to-hand combat or implements of war; The athlete who is required to give his all to overcome an opponent. “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:24-27), A farmer battles nature's elements during seasons of flooding or drought. All of these can be summed up by Paul's admonition to Timothy, when he said, “I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it” (2 Cor. 9:23).

For those soldiers of the cause of Christ, in an effort to overcome the wiles of the devil, must prepare themselves to face difficult situations: “for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds” (1 Cor. 11:14-15).

As daunting as the battle may be, the Lord has provided essential and undefeatable tools: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces

of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints..." (Eph. 6:10-18).