



FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

*You are in a war! Your eternal life depends on the outcome!
Read in this article what and how to fight.*

EVERYBODY likes a fight. No one knows this better than movie producers. That's why nearly every western, spy thriller, or even comedy situation has its *fight* scene. In many cases the picture builds up dramatically to the big fight — the all-out fist fight — where tables, chairs, windows, posts, bottles and nearly every other thing in sight is smashed to pieces.

People love it. But most don't know *why*.

Children love fights. Witness their fighting nature on any playground or school yard.

Even women like fights. Take a look at the front row seats of any boxing or wrestling event. Listen to the high-pitched screams from the audience as *women* fight fans get very involved with their favorite contestant.

A Part of Human Nature

Believe it or not, God made us fighting beings. He put it in man's nature to want to fight and conquer. In fact, *we cannot be happy without fighting and conquering*.

The problem is that most do not know *WHAT* to fight. We fight the wrong things. We want to fight *other people*. We become jealous, envious of others. We quarrel with our mates.

People want to fight all right — but they want to fight other people. And although God made us fighting creatures, He commands us to live in peace.

Notice: God says, "Follow peace with *all men*" (Heb. 12:14). And again He says, "Be at peace *among yourselves*" (1 Thes. 5:13). God admonishes us again, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for *peace*, and things wherewith one may *edify another*" (Romans 14:19).

Not Flesh and Blood

God intends that we fight! But He does not want us to fight other people and *especially* not our own brethren — the other children of God!

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. **FOR WE WRESTLE NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD**, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places [margin]" (Eph. 6:10-12).

You have enemies — vicious, clever, murderous enemies. They are spirit beings — demons — who are fighting you on a spiritual front. They are assaulting you — causing doubt, division, discouragement.

Nothing gives the demons more pleasure than to divert your energy and attention from the spiritual fight and to see you get involved in a battle against other brethren. Jealousy, envy, hard feelings greatly please them.

God intends for you to fight — but not on your own strength. You have to take the whole armor of God — He supplies the tools and means for you to battle against the devil and his demons.

The day you were baptized, the enemy — Satan and his demons — set out to kill you spiritually. They are relentless in this pursuit. Therefore God admonishes you to use His armor and to **FIGHT!**

Here are the weapons of God's warfare. God gives us the truth with which to gird our loins, and righteousness as a breastplate. Our feet are encased with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. And we have a shield to protect us from

the darts of the wicked. That shield is made of faith. Our head is covered with the helmet of salvation — hope for eternal life and our looking forward to entry into God's Kingdom. And one of our most powerful weapons is the sword God has given us. That is the Word of God. Besides all this Christians must pray *for* one another and *help* one another in this all-out struggle for eternal life. See Eph. 6:14-18.

The Second Battle Front

Yes, the devil is our enemy. We have to fight him and the demons. But there is more.

In Romans 12:2 we read, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Notice! Christians are to keep from being conformed to this world. And that's not easy to do!

The society around us — its attitudes, way of doing things, trends, styles, government policies, ideologies, religious and educational philosophies — these are all lumped into one gigantic pressure which the Bible refers to as "this world." The world is like a gigantic press trying to squeeze us, conform us — into its patterns.

Christians are told, "Come out of her, my people" (Rev. 18:4).

There is only one way for you to keep from being crushed and conformed by this world. You have to fight it! The world never ceases to pressure you into the wrong way. It reaches out for you — constantly putting pressure on you — through the media of television, radio, advertisements, books and magazines, and associations with other

people. And the world is reaching out to grab your children. You need to fight for your family as well as for your own life!

There is a war going on — a war in which you can be made a slave. If you don't fight, you will not win.

The Third Battle Front

You not only have to fight the devil and his demons and to fight to resist the pulls and pressures of this world, you also have to fight another very powerful and insidious enemy. That enemy is your own human nature.

Here's how the Apostle Paul describes this war. "I find then a law [a working principle], that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, *warring against the law of my mind*, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:21-23).

There is a war going on inside every Christian. A fight against human nature! Human nature resists you in your efforts to do good. It is a pull in the opposite direction — trying to pull you into the way of sin — warring against you!

Paul further explains this battle in Galatians 5:17. "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these [two] are *contrary* the one to the other: so that you cannot [it is difficult to] do the things that ye would."

When you were converted, you received the Holy Spirit of God. That spirit imparted to you the divine nature of God. But you are still flesh. You are human. You are filled with the nature of man — human nature. The spirit and the flesh are contrary — enmity is constantly present. There is an antagonism between the things of God and the things of the flesh. They actually thrust themselves one against the other.

In other words, there is a constant war going on — human nature *pulling on you* trying to maintain your bondage to sin — and the divine nature leading — showing the way through the Laws of God.

YOU MUST FIGHT YOUR HUMAN NATURE! YOU MUST RESIST THE PULLS OF THE FLESH! And it is a battle!

The Principles of Warfare

The day you were baptized you were drafted into a war — a spiritual war. On that day God made available to you the equipment with which to fight on the three battle fronts — the demons, the world, and your human nature.

But it is difficult for us to recognize that we are *truly* in a war. And we fail to conduct ourselves like the Christian soldiers we should be.

God gives important principles for soldiers. Notice. "Thou therefore *endure hardness*, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 2:3).

Here is one of the first principles a soldier must learn. He must be willing to "endure hardness."

What if a soldier had this attitude? "I'll fight for my country if I can have my three hot meals a day, box spring and mattress, warm fire and stuffed easy chair at night. And I don't mind the shooting as long as it's not in the rain or under muddy conditions. And, I can't stand blood, *nor can I afford to miss my favorite TV programs on Sunday night!*"

Well, such statements are laughable when you think of them coming from a soldier. But what about yourself? Are you willing to endure hardness?

Or do you say, "I'm willing to be a Christian as long as everything goes all right"?

As a soldier of Jesus Christ you must be willing to endure hardness — go through trials — and still keep fighting the enemy. You must recognize that there will be obstacles to hurdle, problems to overcome. But you are made for this! And with God's help you *can conquer!*

Notice another principle in warfare. "NO MAN THAT WARRETH ENTANGLETH HIMSELF WITH THE AFFAIRS OF THIS LIFE; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II Tim. 2:4).

Since the devil knows this principle of warfare, it is his purpose to see to it that we become concerned with the affairs of this life. He would like to see us bog down — get our minds on our finances, our relatives, gossip in the local congregation, our little problems, and to relax in this fight for eternal life.

WE CAN'T GET OUR MINDS OFF THE WARFARE AND ONTO THE AFFAIRS OF THIS LIFE, OR WE WILL SURELY BE KILLED!

Reward Goes to the Winners

In God's Church we hear a lot about overcoming. But do we get the real meaning of this term?

Both the Greek word used in the New Testament writings and the English word "overcome" mean "to conquer."

Now notice Jesus Christ's statement in Revelation 2:26. "And he that overcometh [conquers, subdues], and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations."

Who gets power over the nations? Who will rule with Christ in His Kingdom? Who receives the prize? Does it go to the losers?

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame [conquered], and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21). Who gets to sit with Christ on His throne? To whom does this reward go? It goes to the conquerors — the ones who win in this warfare.

Have you ever seen a boxing match, wrestling match, football game, basketball game or other sporting event where the cup or prize or crown went to the loser? *Losers just don't win!*

And if we lose in this fight, it will mean that we *have been* conquered.

Christ makes this statement in Revelation 21:7. "He that overcometh [conquers, wins] shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Notice the prize! To the conquerors goes the grand prize — inheritance of all things. It is a joint inheritance with Jesus Christ, who is the Great Conqueror!

Jesus Christ was the greatest warrior that ever lived. He met the devil on a spiritual battle front unparalleled in history. He conquered. He went up against His own human nature time and again and came out the victor. He resisted this world — fighting against its pressures all of His life. He was victorious!

But He did none of these things on His own strength. He Himself said that by Himself and of Himself, He could do nothing (John 5:30.) He knew that He had to have God's instruments of warfare and God's help. This same help is available to you and me. But we must recognize we are in a war. We must recognize it is a *fight* for eternal life! And the reward goes to the winners. Losers get nothing.

Men of God — Great Warriors

Today our battle front is on a spiritual plane as described above. But it is interesting to note that all of God's great men were warriors. Some of them were fighters on a physical plane, but they also had to fight the spiritual fight of faith.

Joshua had to fight his way into the Land of Canaan. David had to fight in order to preserve his kingdom. Samson fought. Jephthah fought. Even Abraham was a fighter (Gen. 14).

But God has called *us* not to fight other human beings, but to fight the spiritual fight of faith.

And how do we get into God's Kingdom? Do we fall in? Do we slide in?

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence [margin: is gotten by force], and the violent take it by force [or, it is gotten by men of driving force]" (Matt. 11:12).

Here is the comment from the *Expository Dictionary* on this verse. "Those who are possessed of eagerness and zeal, instead of giving up to the opposition, press their way into the kingdom." It is a fight, a press, a driving effort to get into God's Kingdom!

God made man to conquer. Even a noted psychologist understands this about human nature. He said, "We are engineered as goal-seeking mechanisms. We are built that way. When we have no personal goal that means something to us, we are apt to find life itself purposeless. We are built to conquer environment, solve problems and achieve goals and we find no real happiness or satisfaction in life without this. People who say that life is not worthwhile are really saying that they themselves have no personal goals that are worthwhile."

How true! Man loves things that are challenging — things he must overcome. Notice sports. Would people go hunting if all animals were tame? Would golfing be interesting if every swing were a hole-in-one? No, we are attracted by the adventure of accomplishment — the adventure of overcoming.

Right or Wrong You Will Fight

Man has a fighting nature. He will fight something. And if a person is not fighting the right things, he ends up fighting other people.

Take, for example, people who are lonely and have no hobbies or outside interests. What do they do? In most cases they end up minding other peoples' business, causing problems through gossip and envy. Since they have no other worthwhile goals, they turn inward and want to fight their fellowman. There are millions of such unhappy souls in this world. Their human nature cries out for something to conquer. But they don't know what to fight.

What about you? You are designed to conquer and overcome. You must win against your human nature! You are pitted against the devil and his demons and you must come out the victor! The world is pressing you — trying to conform you to its patterns — and you must resist!

Be driving, intense, and forceful when it comes to overcoming these obstacles! But be loving, kind, and patient *with other people*.

Notice Paul's statement shortly before his death. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to *me only*, but *unto all them also* that love His appearing" (II Tim. 4:6-8).

Paul described his life as a Christian as a fight. He did not say, "I have lived a good life." He said, "I have fought a good fight."

He had won. He had conquered. And he knew there was a crown in store for him as well as for all others who fight the good fight and keep the faith.

Brethren, can we realize we are in a fight for Eternal Life? Can we get rid of the lethargy that is characteristic of our times? Can we see the goal before us?

Here is God's admonition to you.

"*FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH, LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE*" (I Tim. 6:12). □