

The Christian Warfare

As we all know war has started in Iraq. I have prayed against war but some how God in His sovereignty decided not to answer my prayers.

We need to be in prayer for God's protection for the believers in Iraq. There are about 400.000 Christians in Iraq, 250.000 Roman Catholics, 120.000 Orthodox believers, 20.000 evangelicals and over 10.000 Pentecostals. There are at least 70 evangelical congregations and some 300 house churches. The Christian community is largely **Assyrian who are the descendants of the Nestorian Church.** The Nestorians are called one the greatest missionary denominations of history winning 6% of the entire Asian population to Christ 1000 years ago. They evangelized from Iraq eastward to Iran, Afghanistan, China, Korea and Japan.

Many Assyrians study the Bible in so called "**Light Clubs**".

The Jesus Film is available in Iraq in 10 languages.

It is interesting to observe that in the NT the Lord Jesus never taught His followers to go to war or to rebel against Roman Empire which was actually a Colonial power in Israel when Jesus ministered. The Lord was once questioned about paying taxes to the Roman government. He asked for a coin and asked about the picture on the coin. It was the face of Caesar. The Lord said to "**pay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God**".

One time Peter was ready to fight and defend the Lord. This certainly seemed a good cause to him. He took out his sword and just about cut off the head of a soldier. The Lord put back the ear and told Peter to put back his sword and said. "**those who use the sword will die by the sword**".

In Matthew 5:9 the Lord Jesus said, "**Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the sons of God**". Christ is the bringer of peace by means of His cross. How we make peace? There is only one way in that by bringing Christ to the nations.

The Dani Tribe in the Interior of Irian Jaya used to be fierce fighters. My friend Tom Bozeman went there in the late fifties to bring the Gospel of peace to the Danies. For 3 years he labored there. He learned the Dani language and he build a little church and every Sunday morning rang the bell to call the people to come to church. Only 2 or 3 came. After 3 years he was discouraged and was ready to move. He began packing his things. While he was packing the Dani Chief came by and informed Tom that next week he and the entire tribe would become Christian. Tom asked the chief how is this possible because you have never been to church and know nothing about being a Christian. The chief replied that every week he sent a few people to church to hear the message and report back to him what it means to be a Christian. For 3 years they discussed this matter and finally made the decision to become Christian. They had weighed the pro and cons and decided they would gain much be becoming believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following Sunday about 30,000 Danies gathered at the airstrip in Mulia. They walked from the valleys and mountains. They brought their weapons and when they put their bows, arrows and spears in a pile to be burned, Tom said “don’t burn your weapons, the enemy may come to attack you.” The chief replied, “You have taught us that the Lord will be our protector”. They burned all their weapons and peace came to the Dani Tribe.

Peace came when the Danies accepted Christ as Savior. Peace comes to your heart and mine when we accept Christ as our Savior. But as believers we now face a new conflict and this conflict is described in Ephesians 6:10-18.

When we go out in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus Christ to share the Gospel with the nations we do face a conflict as described in Ephesians chapter 6.

For all the joys and peace and happiness in the Christian life it is nevertheless a life lived out on a spiritual battlefield. **The Christian life is like living in a camp in enemy territory. Within the camp there is love, loyalty, fellowship, joy and peace.**

In the passage we just read we may note the believers strength, the believers enemy and the believers protection.

The believer’s strength (verse 10). There are two words used here as the sources of our strength ‘mighty’ and ‘power’. In Chapter 1 verse 19: “This incomparable great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength”. God’s mighty strength is seen throughout history and throughout the Bible. Examples are,

God’s creation

The worldwide flood

The annihilation of two cities, Sodom and Gomorrah

The miracles and plagues against the Egyptians to deliver Israel out of slavery.

The daily feeding of a nation for 40 years by dropping food from heaven every Morning.

The healing power of Jesus Christ demonstrated for 3 ½ years by healing all the sick that came to Him.

The power of the resurrection.

The power of prayer! The believers prayed for 73 years and finally God brought down Godless communism and today the former Soviet Union is open to the

Gospel and missionaries have entered all these former Soviet nations.

This incomparable great power is available to all us who believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is this mighty strength. All power in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus Christ. You and I may receive Him into our lives so we may appropriate this might power. Praise the Name of the Lord.

The believer’s enemy (verse 11-12). Verse 11 talks about the need to stand up against the devil’s schemes or strategies. This Greek word ‘methodias’ is found nowhere else in Greek literature but only in this letter. It means the deceitful plans and crafty assaults of the devil against the believers. He comes like an angel of light or like a roaring lion.

The terms “rulers, authorities, powers, spiritual forces” are terms used here for the hierarchy of the invisible powers in rebellion against God. There are not necessarily 4 classes of demonic being. The devil and his angels are described as wicked spirits, operating with authority and power having control over a world rebelling against God, belonging to the invisible regions of the spirit world.

“**In the heavenly realms**” may be interpreted as the scene of the conflict. This may refer to the heavenly realm in which the life in Christ is lived.

The believer’s Protection (verse 11,13-20)

A picture of a Roman soldier.

“Put on the full armor of God”. It is armor of God meaning that God provides this full armor. It is complete and ready for our use. But we must accept and implement (put it on) the armor that God offers to us. Only then are we able to stand up and resist the attacks of the devil with his crafty and deceitful strategies.

The belt of truth (verse 14)

The Greek word is ‘aletheia’. Truth here is more than simply the human virtue of sincerity and honesty. It is the knowledge of and belief in the revealed Word of God. The believer appropriates the Word through Faith. Being buckled with the belt of truth means we believe and obey the Word of God.

The breastplate of righteousness in place (verse 14) The breastplate protected the vital organs in the chest area of the soldier. This is the life of purity and holiness as Christ is able to live His life in and through us. Barclay writes, “when a man is clothed with righteousness he is impregnable. Words are no defense against accusations but a good life is.” Bravery and courage flow from holiness and righteousness. But if we yield to sin we immediately become vulnerable. Cowardice and hesitancy are by-products of the unrighteous heart.

The sandals of the Gospel (verse 15)

Your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace. We are standing in the saving power of the Gospel of peace. We are only prepared and ready to resist the devil and demonic powers when we have received Salvation of Jesus Christ. Then we stand secure and not slip and fall when the devil comes at us with all his tricks. We must always be ready to share the Gospel with those around us. It is a very effective weapon against the attacks of the devil.

The shield of faith (verse 16). Faith in a mighty God protects us from the attacks of the devil. Faith moves the hand of God. That faith, which brings deliverance from sin, is the faith that keeps. By faith we can stop every burning missile the enemy shoots at us. “flaming arrows”. Talking about ancient warfare, being arrows dipped in some combustible materials and set on fire before being thrown at the enemy. ‘Faith’, is total and complete dependence on God and is the protection for the believer from the vicious attacks of the devil.

The helmet of salvation, (verse 17) This is the last piece of defensive equipment given to us for our protection in this spiritual warfare. We must take it, receive it. The believer is the partaker of the grace of God unto salvation and as such we are more than conquerors. Roman 8:37. If God is for us who can be against us? Romans 8:31. We have saved by an all-powerful God and cannot be defeated.

The sword of the Spirit, (verse 17) This is the only offensive weapon in the armor. None other is needed. It is the Word of God. It is all powerful, it never changes. We go into battle with God's Word in our hands. It is a most dependable weapon. We don't go out arguing and debating. We proclaim boldly "God says....", "The Bible says... ", "Jesus said....". There is weakness in our language but great power in God's Word.

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests (verse 18). As we go out in battle with God's armor we constantly pray to Him. We totally depend on Him. We keep communication with our Head Quarters. We need His instructions. There is power in prayer. God answers prayer. Prayer is the key to victory. Prayer changes things. When we pray we show our faith and total dependency on God. When we don't pray we have an attitude "I can do, I am strong, and I am capable". How weak we are in our own strength. We go out in His strength, with His armor and in His might. I just read the story about David, a shepherd boy. He was facing a giant and hero of the enemy armies named Goliath. Every one was scared of this monster. But David said, **"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel."**

You know what happened. David triumphed over Goliath with a sling and a stone without a sword in his hand. Today we serve the same God David served. We go out in the name of the Lord Almighty. His is the victory. To Him be all the glory. Amen.