



FEBRUARY 2017
MILITARY MENTALITY

Greeting fellow saints and soldiers of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Grace and peace be yours as you grow in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

This month, let me briefly give you an update on what has been going on recently at High Point Church (the church that I pastor):

Things are going very well at HPC! We have been seeing growth, while also growing closer and closer together as a family. The Lord has been adding some very solid believers to our local flock, and for that, I am so thankful!

At the beginning of 2017, the Lord impressed me to begin a new series on the subject of spiritual warfare where I have envisioned covering the overall theme of "spiritual warfare" for probably the first half of the year. However, it will be broken down into a few different series during this five to six month period- such as, the basic training of spiritual warfare, the authority of the believer, the battlefield of the mind, understanding our enemy and the whole armor of God. I am super excited about going through all of these topics because this is one of my favorite subjects to cover!

You see, one of the things that I have noticed in my relatively short time in ministry is that the vast majority of God's people are extremely ignorant of how the enemy works, the authority that we have over Him, and how to fight him. In fact, what I have noticed is that most of the body of Christ today show through their actions that they are completely unaware that there even is a kingdom of darkness out there, much less know how to resist and overcome it.

That is why I felt led by the Holy Spirit to camp on this subject for a good period of time at High Point Church- so that our church can become more aware of the spiritual warfare that we are currently in and to learn how to use the delegated authority that we have been given and take the kingdom by force. Amen!?!

You see, in times past, there has been much emphasis on spiritual warfare in the Body of Christ- some good and some bad:

This emphasis has been good in that we indeed do need to learn about the enemy and his devices as well as our authority and our weapons. When we understand these things, we will be better prepared for Satan's methods of operation and thus be well equipped to defend ourselves while being on the offensive. You see, a smart soldier will learn as much as he or she can about their enemy because, the more they know about them, the more prepared they will be to fight them. This is a vital part of warfare because a soldier then will know what to expect from their enemy.

The Lord said in Hosea 4:6, "*My people* (not "unbelievers," mind you) *are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*" This verse does not say that God's people are destroyed by demons, nor does it say we are destroyed by the devil. Destruction in the life of a believer simply occurs through ignorance. This is why ignorance is so deadly. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:11, "...we are not ignorant of Satan's devices." So this verse indicates that God does not want His people being ignorant of the devil's schemes and He has not left us in the dark concerning his methods of operation.

I once heard the following statement: **a believer's ignorance of the Word of God is the only effective weapon the enemy can use against them.** That's why Satan fears our discovery of the truth concerning spiritual warfare- because he knows that he will lose that advantage he has had over us. Therefore, we can conclude that ignorance of this subject will leave us in a dangerous position.

However, some of the emphasis of this subject has also been bad because this subject has a unique way of captivating people's attention to the extent that they end up thinking of nothing else but spiritual warfare. The devil has a way of tricking very well meaning Christians into making them magnify his power to a

greater degree than it deserves. These unbalanced believers will begin to see the devil behind everything that occurs and can become ineffective in functioning normally in everyday life.

But although the Body of Christ has gotten into one ditch or another in regards to this subject, there is a healthy balance to it and I have endeavored, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to take that balanced approach as we go through this subject at our church.

Well, what I ended up covering in the very first message of this series is what I have on my heart to share with all of you this month because I see this truth as a major need in the life of every born-again believer. So let's turn over to that most popular passage of Scripture on the subject of spiritual warfare and look at something very interesting that the Apostle Paul began with...

THE BEST FOR LAST

Ephesians 6:10

*“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord
and in the power of His might.”*

Of course, we know that this statement precedes Paul's exhortations for us to put on the whole armor of God, right? Therefore, we must first understand one very important thing: the armor of the Roman soldier (which is likely the example that the Holy Spirit was drawing from since Paul was constantly chained up to one of these soldiers during his many imprisonments), was made up of a breastplate, helmet, shield, sandals, belt, sword, & lance. And in all, historians tell us that their armor usually weighed anywhere from 150-300 lbs. So if their armor weighed that much it had to take a strong, physically in-shape soldier to carry around all that armor, right? That's why Paul tells us to “be strong” before he even mentions the armor at all. In other words, we must be spiritually fit and spiritually strong before we will be able to fully function in the whole armor of God. Amen?

Now let's look at the beginning of this verse in detail because Paul begins his transition from all his doctrinal and practical teaching in this letter to the Church of Ephesus into spiritual warfare and armor by using a significant word- “Finally...”

You see, the word “Finally” means more than just “In conclusion.” This word literally carries the idea of “Finally, I've saved the best for last”, or “Now, out of everything that I've previously said to you, this is the most important. If you're going to get anything, get what I'm about to tell you.” Paul, in essence, was saying that his upcoming comments on spiritual warfare were more important to the church of Ephesus than all the subjects he previously covered- such as, predestination, adoption, election, the mystery of the New Covenant, being filled with the Spirit, etc.

Now if you are familiar with the Book of Ephesians then you know that as Paul penned this letter to them that he didn't stop to explain all these deep subjects. And why not? It is because the Church of Ephesus was the mega church of their day and it was the spiritual mecca of the Roman Empire. It was also the church that was in the center of all the transportation of Asia Minor. Therefore, all the “big preachers” came through there: Timothy was their pastor. The Apostle Peter preached there. The Apostle Paul taught there. The Evangelist Phillip ministered there. The Apostle John and Mary, the mother of Jesus, even attended there. So they had all the best speakers, and even though they got the best Word, they had left their first love (See Revelations 2:4).

You see, evidently, we can get so much good Word and still live dry and defeated lives. This can happen when we fall in love with the Bible but fall out of love with its Author. Friends, we must always guard ourselves from embracing the methods of Christianity and letting go of our love for Christ. That is why Paul said here, “Finally, now that I've just touched on all this rich doctrine that you are accustomed to

getting, I've saved the best and most important piece of information for last..."

You see, these believers had acquired all this spiritual knowledge but what they needed to hear now was... "Finally, I have gotten to the most important part of my letter to you: it's time to apply all the things you have learned! It's time to take the intellectual understanding that you have gained of the Word of God and turn it into the "sword of the Spirit!" It's time to take that faith that you have developed and start using it as the "shield of faith!" It's time to start applying the truth of your righteousness in the sight of God by making it your "breastplate of righteousness!" And I could go on and on.

But the Apostle Paul did not start with the armor of God. He started with the strength of the soldier first here in 6:10. And, again, this was because armor generally weighs a lot and only the strong soldier can effectively fight in it.

Well, it works this way in the military today too, doesn't it? Before a recruit puts on their armor and goes into battle, they go through a few weeks of "basic training" (i.e. boot camp), right? And why? They obviously do this because it is important for them to get physically in shape. But they also do this because it is imperative for them to get into the right frame of mind before going to war. They must train in certain areas- both mentally and physically- in order to be prepared for warfare.

Likewise (and, Finally ☺), we need to become strong in the Lord and develop certain mindsets and mentalities in order to be ready to start tackling the kingdom of darkness. Amen? This is why the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 6:10, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might"...

So we can conclude that, just as it is in the natural, we need to get ourselves in a good spiritual condition, developing certain attitudes, so that we will be better prepared for the battles we will face. In short, we need to go through some "basic training" in regards to spiritual warfare in order to remain balanced. Amen?

So let's turn over to 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and look at a very important passage of Scripture that will help build that new mindset in us concerning a balanced approach to spiritual warfare...

WE ARE IN A SPIRITUAL WAR!

2 Corinthians 10:3

*"For though we walk in the flesh,
we do not war according to the flesh."*

The first thing we must understand about spiritual warfare is that it is exactly that- it is **spiritual** warfare. This is not a natural battle that we are engaged in; it is a spiritual battle! It's not about the flesh. It's not any kind of natural thing. It is all in the spiritual realm. You see, the enemy wants you to fight him on his turf, which is the flesh realm. If we fight him on his turf, then we will ultimately lose because he has the home field advantage.

So the war is spiritual even though it might not always appear to be. You might say, "I know that." But it's not what you know in your head it's what you know in your heart. Do you get offended at people who say all manner of evil against you? Do you get bitter at people when they persecute you? Do you retaliate and not turn the other cheek when someone assaults you? If you said "yes" to any of these questions then you need to get this point embedded in you- we are in a "spiritual" war not a "natural" one!

Friends, never forget this one thing: people are not your enemy; Satan is your real enemy. Yes, Satan will use people to attack you, but that doesn't make them your enemy; that just makes them the weapon used by your real enemy to hurt and wound you.

One of my favorite Scriptures that teaches us this very truth is Ephesians 6:12. It says, "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against...*" Paul then goes on to name different classifications of demons.

Again my friends: we are not wrestling against evil people; **we wrestle with evil spirits that are influencing ignorant people to do evil things.**

So what Paul was saying here in 2 Corinthians 10:3 was- “Even though I walk in this natural body- I eat in the flesh, I communicate in the flesh, I sleep in the flesh, I think in the flesh. Although I do almost everything I do in this fleshly realm...” He then goes on to explain one thing that he doesn’t do in this natural realm: He says, “*we do not war according to the flesh.*” Paul was saying that just about everything he does, he does it in the flesh; but one of the things he does not do in the flesh is “war.” This means that he did not do his fighting in the flesh, nor was he wrestling with flesh and blood. Amen! We would do good to understand that ourselves.

GOOD SOLDIERS OF JESUS CHRIST

Now an important point that I want you to get is found in the word Paul used for “war” in this verse... The Greek word that he used here literally describes “serving as a soldier for the purpose of going to war.” Thayer’s Greek Lexicon defines this word as “to do a military duty, (or) to be on active service (i.e. to be a soldier).” So by using this word here, what is being implied is that we indeed do serve as soldiers and are on active military duty for the kingdom of God. Amen!

No, there are no “reserves” in the army of the Lord; we are all enlisted into full time, active duty in the kingdom of God! And, no, we are not talking about being soldiers *according to the flesh* as the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:3; rather, we are talking about being enlisted into that spiritual army of the Lord of hosts. Amen!

You see, we need to develop a new image and mentality of what we are in the spirit, saints. Sure, we are children of God by (new) birth. Absolutely! Yes, we are bondservants of the Lord being bought with a price. This too is true! But what we also need to renew our minds to is that we are soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ as well! Amen!

Let’s look at a couple of Scriptures that further teach us this...

In 2 Timothy 2:3-4, the Apostle Paul in speaking to his son in the faith, Timothy, said, “*You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*”

Several things ring true in these two verses:

1. It is implied in verse 3 that we are soldiers of Jesus Christ and, therefore, are exhorted to be good soldiers by enduring the hardships that we face. You see, if we can be good soldiers of Jesus Christ then it stands to reason that we can be bad soldiers too. And this Scripture teaches us that the way we are good soldiers is by successfully “enduring hardship.” So what makes a poor excuse for a soldier is someone who is always whining and complaining about how tough it is, how much the devil has been attacking them, etc. Friends, we need to toughen up! We need to adopt this mentality of a soldier and understand that being on active duty in the Lord’s army is going to result in some hardship.
2. It is implied in verse 4 that we are already engaged in warfare. Therefore, we should not entangle ourselves in the affairs of this life. In other words, we are already engaging the enemy, so we need to avoid the distractions of this natural world and stay focused on destroying the works of darkness.
3. And, finally, it is also implied in verse 4 that we are already enlisted as soldiers and should strive to please Him who has signed us up. Therefore, we are already enlisted in the Lord’s army whether we realize it or not! We are already engaged in this spiritual warfare! Therefore, our aim is to please our Commanding Officer by being 100% committed to His kingdom’s cause. Amen!

You see, this mentality that Paul had is foreign to most of us. Most believers see the Christian life as us just being saved and everything is hunky dory. But that is not the way the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to describe the Christian life here, is it? No, what we have described here is something very similar to signing up for a branch of the military here in the United States and being slap dab in the middle of a war!

Another example of the Apostle Paul's military mentality is that when greeting his fellow Christians in Rome he used the term "salute" (See the KJV version of Romans chapter 16). To use the military word "salute" over and over like he did shows us the mentality that Paul had: He didn't see his brothers and sisters in Christ as just companions; he saw them as comrades! Amen! Likewise, we should adopt this same mentality because, like it or not, we are soldiers in the middle of a spiritual war.

So when we were born again and entered into God's kingdom we, in essence, signed up for the military (whether we know it or not). We became "soldiers of Jesus Christ." And being in God's armed forces we can expect to be targeted by God's enemy- the devil. This war isn't just going to bypass us if we stick our heads in the ground like an ostrich and pretend like we are ignorant of the warfare going on around us. No, we must know all that we can about the warfare that is constantly around us and expect to get some sort of resistance from the devil in our lives. It's unavoidable if you are walking with the Lord.

SOBER SOLDIERS

The Apostle Peter echoes this military mentality in his first epistle... He says in **1 Peter 5:8**, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.*"

Now most people, when quoting this verse, remember the "the devil walking about like a roaring lion" part, but what I have found that most of us miss is the part that tells us what we are to do about this fact that the devil is on the prowl seeking to devour us.

So what are we to do about this? Well, notice that Peter begins this verse by giving us two admonitions: He tells us to "be sober" and "vigilant."

The first admonition to "be sober" literally means "to think straight." Being sober describes having a clear head and is basically the opposite of what it is like to be under the influence of alcohol. So the gist of this word "sober" is how important it is for us to be mentally self-controlled. You see, it is extremely important to be in control of our mind and emotions. If we do not guard our heart with all diligence, then we are giving Satan the advantage because this is where he primarily fights us- in our mind.

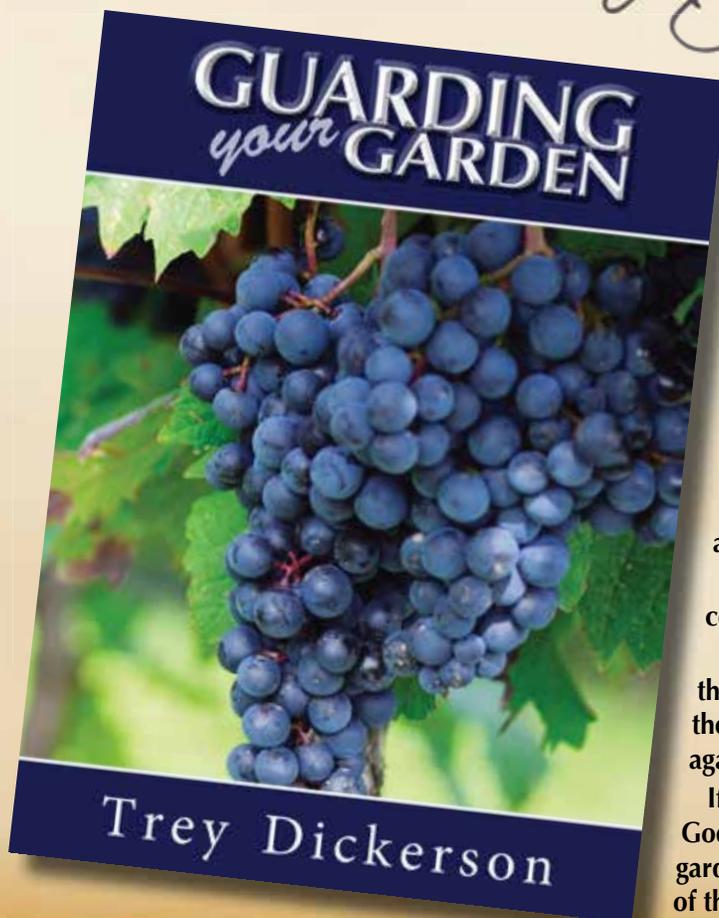
Then Peter admonishes us to "be vigilant." This word literally means "to be awake, watchful, and standing guard." This word was used continuously by Jesus in a positive manner when exhorting us to "watch" for His return. He also used it in the same light as 1 Peter 5:8 when He said, "Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation..." (Matthew 26:41).

You see, as good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the midst of this spiritual battle, we need to be alert and watchful. This is not a game. We are in a war here and we are on our enemy's turf. Just think about it: If you were in a natural war and were walking through the enemy's territory, do you reckon you would be a little awake and alert? Of course, you would! You would be extremely "vigilant" because you understand that if you are not watchful and completely alert you could lose your life. Likewise, we are in the enemy's camp and are his targets for destruction.

But the good news is that although we are in the world, we are not of the world! We have the Greater One- The Holy Spirit- on the inside of us, and He is greater than our enemy that is in the world! He will guide us to avoid those temptations that are thrown our way, and He will also help us by putting the appropriate ammunition in our hands when we need it!

- ✓ So what Peter is saying here is that we need to be in control of our thought life and we need to be fully alert because our enemy is constantly targeting us, waiting for an open shot. And this is why we must maintain this militant attitude at all times as well. Why? Because if we just float through life mentally unprepared, the enemy will easily pick us apart.
- ✓ So we need to change our mentality, saints! We ought to start thinking like soldiers of Jesus Christ and let this new identity change the way we live our lives.
- ✓ Sure, it is important to understand that we are children of God and, therefore, born (again) to be kings. Sure, it is also important to understand that we are bondservants of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, are called to be priests unto our God. But we also need this revelation as well- that we are soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ! This is one of the first things a raw recruit will learn in "boot camp," and it is likewise one of the most important things we can learn as good soldiers of Jesus Christ! Amen!

Victoriously,



Coming Soon!

In this 9 CD series entitled "Guarding Your Garden," Pastor Trey will teach you:

- Why we are to guard our hearts above everything else that we guard in our life.
- Practical ways in which we guard our hearts
- Four types of hearts and their characteristics as described in Jesus' Parable of the Sower
- Remedies for each of these four different conditions of the heart

Friends, as the Lord created Adam and put him in the garden to tend and keep it, now God has put the garden in us and given us the responsibility once again to tend and keep it.

If you want to begin partaking of all the fruit that God has said is yours, it begins with guarding the garden of your heart. You will never read the Parable of the Sower the same way again!