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SERMON TITLE: The Church's Warfare: Part One
SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 6:10-13
DATE: April 7, 2019
Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Read also Psalm 121.

The Bible says the devil is at war – specifically, at war against humans. Peter writes, “Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

The Psalmist tells us, in counterbalance, that ‘God watches over you and stands beside you as your protector and he never slumbers or sleeps. The LORD himself! The LORD keeps you from all harm and watches over your life.’ But, if you sense you are in a battle, what do you do?

- Do you panic?
- Fall apart?
- Think faith is not real?
- Curse God?

Paul proposes that we have a sense of confidence and security in the midst of bitter combat. READ Ephesians 6:10-13

Did you notice the military images? Did you hear the description of the enemy? In most wars of the past, we have known the enemy, although here, the enemy is elusive:

“For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places” (v. 12).

Our enemies are opposing cosmic powers led by the devil. The opposition is fierce. However, always remember the devil is not equivalent to God. The Bible identifies Satan as a fallen angel. Angels are created spiritual beings. When Satan rebelled against God, he took a third of the angels with him and they became demonic forces. They are fierce, threatening, menacing beings. They are associated with the darkness in this world. But, Christ rules over them, now and in the age to come. Remember whenever he encountered demons while on earth—he was always able to cast them out without question.

That's the enemy. Then there's God's side.

With the Holy Spirit living in you, a gift of God to you, you are fighting from a position of victory.

- On God's side is mighty power
- With God you have protective armor
- His presence enables you to stand strong against all strategies of the devil
- You have the power to resist the enemy

After the battle you will still be standing firm.

Thus you are a soldier and Jesus, your Commander, gives you power, protection, and presence.

This passage indicates that there are days of evil that come to us—this is definitive; Satan and his minions have an acknowledged presence in this world. Martin Luther writes: “The world with devils filled.”¹ Don’t be surprised. Expect to be at war because of this. We sang words written by Charles Wesley that call us soldiers of Christ.² Wesley writes, “Take, to arm you for the fight, the panoply of God.” A panoply is anything protecting completely or forming a magnificent covering, a complete suit of armor. Don’t be surprised. We find ourselves in a war and all categories of life are affected—health, economics, relationships, work environments, accidents, attacks of all kinds, being taken advantage of, suffering injustice, and the list goes on.

Every person bears these burdens in life. No one escapes them, but you are offered victory in them! You are offered strength to get through them. You are offered great might to overcome them. You are assured of virtue, grace, stability, and protection to stand tall.

I wanted to talk to someone who has experienced war to understand the warrior imagery. I also wanted to talk to someone who is fighting a battle in the everyday reality of life, and I found that opportunity in one person in this congregation who has fought both.³ He helped me write this sermon. Let’s call his words the “Scott Counsel.” These are his words.

He begins. Our theology is Trinitarian: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. We know a great deal about the Father and the Son but are less familiar with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives the understanding. The Holy Spirit in me fights the evil spirit. When you face a trial of the “40 days and 40 nights” variety, that is, the temptation of Satan, what are you going to do to stand up?

¹ Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” written in 1529, Trans. Frederick Henry Hedge, 1852.

² Charles Wesley, “Soldiers of Christ, Arise,” written in 1749.

³ He is a Vietnam veteran who received the Air Force Distinguished Flying Cross medal.

Look for partnership with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not depart.

In war—whether it is military or civilian, it is a daily fight. You do not want it to be a fight from weakness. Through the Holy Spirit you put on your armor every day. That is your internal armor.

The Bible says, “Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Scott Counsel Principle #1: “Seek out others who carry the Holy Spirit within. Ask them to teach you what is right and wrong and how to do this.”

His advisors were many. One in particular was his father, who was a Lieutenant Colonel.

Principle #2: “Put on the mantel of trainee.”

You must have a teachable spirit.

Principle #3: “Expect trials and temptations that challenge your moral values.”

He told an experience of being in a “free fire zone” which means not on the field of battle. He saw a man, a citizen of Vietnam who was fishing from a small boat; out caring for his family. He did not understand himself as a victim of high level governmental decisions. (that is, our nations are at war.) From one way of thinking, if you killed him, it was one less guy to deal with. But, our warrior wanted to work and go to church on Sunday and have his week’s actions mesh with his beliefs. He did not kill, and the Holy Spirit within him confirmed that he had done the right thing.

Principle #4: “The geopolitical system is not necessarily moral. You bring the moral factor.”

In this case, the geopolitical more was it was okay to murder. But, our man wanted to come out better. He wanted to define the system better than its mores of “just get rid of the evil person.”

Principle #5: “It costs you to fight the system.”

But make up your mind to leave the field with honor. Defend yourself; do your job. But as a Christian, you must make a decision from a spiritual vantage point. There is no honor to say, “I’ve fought and won or fought and lost.” But it is honor to say, “*Lord, how did I do for your Pleasure?*”

Principle #6: “Feel good to be on the path. The Holy Spirit is paving a way for you.”

It is the wrong question to ask, “Am I on the right road?” The real question is, “I am on the road. Will I leave it with honor or will I leave a path created only by my own walk?”

That's Scott Counsel. Now let's turn to day-to-day problems, which might include illness, family struggles, addictions, injustice, economic instability, problems in the workforce. These principles apply in the same way.

The question is not, “Why do I have this problem?” which is actually asking, “Why can’t I control this?” The real question is, “Holy Spirit, what do you want me to do?”

My advice is to pick one area where Satan is getting the best of you. Only you know that area. Then you begin to apply these principles:

1. Seek people with the Holy Spirit and ask them to teach you.
2. Put on the mantel of trainee.
3. Expect trials and do not be shaken by them.
4. The geopolitical climate is not routinely moral. YOU bring the moral factor.
5. Make a decision from a spiritual vantage point. Ask: “*Lord, how did I do for your Pleasure?*”
6. Tell yourself: “The Lord is paving a way for me. Feel good on the path.”

Through the Holy Spirit you put on your armor every day. Then, “Be strong in the Lord and the strength of his power.”

He has the VICTORY.

AMEN