

## FIGHTING THE NOBLE WARFARE

### VICTORY OVER ACCUSATIONS, TEMPTATIONS, SUDDEN TRIALS

*Ephesians 6:10-18—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 wrestling 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 heavenlies. 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 fiery darts of the evil one. And take up 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.*

*II Timothy 2:1-7, 22—You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 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...Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*

Let us pray:

*Our Father, we thank You that we can come to You in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mighty name! What a name! We realize that You have given all in Christ to us—including the armor that we need to fight this noble fight. And now we pray that You would give us ears to hear what the Spirit would say to us. Indeed, we believe that every heart here wants to fight the good fight, run the course and keep the faith. But even in saying these things, we feel the need to lay hold of Your life, and to lean upon Your everlasting arms. We ask for Your help, and we thank You for that help; in the name of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

We can see in chapter 2 of II Timothy that Paul realizes the time of his going to the Lord has come, and he is passing the torch of the testimony to his younger son in the Lord—Timothy.

Also, in chapter 2, we see the verses in which some Bible teachers say there are three illustrations, but I believe there are four. He speaks of the soldier, an athlete and a farmer. However, there are others who believe that in verse 2 he is making reference to the marathon. In that ancient marathon, they took a torch and ran with it a certain distance, passing it off three times until they arrived at the end. And this is what we see Paul doing here in verse 2: “The things which you have heard from me [Paul] in the presence of many witnesses.” The apostle Paul has been faithfully carrying the torch of the testimony, and he is now saying, “Timothy, take that torch and entrust these things to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

Thus, we have a wonderful picture of Paul, who is passing the torch of the testimony to younger Timothy, and by the grace of God that torch has been passed on down through the generations to faithful men and women.

### **THE NOBLE FIGHT**

But the time had come for Timothy to grow up. He had received much from Paul, but now the apostle says, “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 2:1b). This Greek word is actually in the reflective. In other words, “Strengthen yourself in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. All the grace that you need to be a noble fighter has been given to you. Therefore, you need to use that grace; trust that grace; and by faith take hold of that grace. How else can you fight the noble fight?”

We are calling this a noble fight because we have been called to put the enemy under the feet of our Lord as a footstool. And as we engage in this noble warfare, our lives will be perfected in the process. As we fight this noble warfare, we will find ourselves fighting by the character and the life of the Lord who dwells within us. Hence, it is by the Lord’s life that we fight the noble fight.

We encounter this noble fight in verses 3-4: “Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” This is our calling. “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.” We have been enlisted by the King of kings, Jesus Christ, and because we are soldiers in the King’s army, we want to do what is right. Of course, there are many affairs in everyday life, but we are not to become distracted by them. We defer their importance in order to serve our heavenly King. This is the noble fight.

Now I want you to notice in Ephesians 6 that it says, “We wrestle.” Now this is a picture of an individual warfare. There is the corporate warfare, but we cannot engage in warfare as the church of Jesus Christ unless we are individually faithful in fighting the good fight. And so we wrestle. I doubt that you have ever seen a wrestling match where ten people come in and start wrestling at the same time. This is one on one. Timothy must be faithful because he is destined to become a son, and so he is the one who has to wrestle in this warfare.

Previously, we spoke about wrestling against the deception of the devil. At first this seems like an impossible task. In Genesis it says, “And the serpent was more subtle than all the beasts of the field” (see 3:1). We cannot begin to understand how subtle the schemes of the enemy are; but throughout the generations of the history of men, they have been deceived time and time again. He rules in the darkness; and in the darkness of our heart he deceives us.

### **WALKING IN THE LIGHT**

Now, how can we fight the noble fight? There is only one way—in the light. The enemy has no power in the light. We recall that simple but wonderful passage in 1 John: “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1:5b). Wherever Jesus went as He walked upon the earth, darkness fled, and even the demons scurried to the corners. “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us” (I John 1:8). But the wonderful thing is that our victory is in walking in the light. As children of God, we can walk in the light. If we walk in the light as *He* is in the light, our Lord Jesus is with us in the light, walking with us—and we have fellowship one with another.

This is a picture of our church life which is fellowship in the light. The church is the pillar and support of the truth. However, when we fellowship in the light, sin is exposed and deceptions are

revealed. Now what should we do? “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9). This is our life, and if we would walk in this life, there can be no deception. The darkness of the enemy has no place in the light. We need to fellowship with one another in the light. We need to tell our brother or sister: “My brother, I think you are going into the shadows.” Then, if we confess our sins, He cleanses us from all sin because He is our Advocate. He is the mercy seat for our sins so that we can live in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

So, we know that deception will only be found in dark places. Do you want to fight the good fight? Live in the light. Let this be a light to you, and the enemy cannot influence you.

### **VICTORY THROUGH STANDING IN THE ROCK**

Now we want to consider some other schemes of the enemy—accusations, temptations, sudden trials. And we will look at two pictures from the life of David, who was a good and noble warrior. First of all, how can we stand against these schemes of the devil? We stand in the Rock of our salvation. We gain the victory in this spiritual warfare by standing.

Probably, we all know the story of David. When he was a little boy, he was a shepherd, and some believe that while he was still a young shepherd, he found some caves which became a hiding place. We know there are many references that David makes to the rock of his salvation, which is not talking about a stone but a cave. But listen to what he says in Psalm 18: “I love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies” (vs. 1-3).

Again, David says in Psalm 62:1-2: “My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken.”

And then in Psalm 61:2: “From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been a refuge for me, a tower of strength against the enemy. Let me dwell in Your tent forever; let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings.”

On the western side of Bethlehem was the cave of Adullam. Perhaps David found this cave as a young shepherd boy; but when he became a man—and Saul, who was full of the evil spirit tried to destroy him—he ran to the rock. He hid in the cave of Adullam. It says that not only his family came to him in the cave but other men as well (see I Samuel 22:1-2). This became his fortress and his refuge. But it also became the place where David saw that God was his Rock. He could not always run to the cave in Adullam because he was fleeing from place to place. Nevertheless, he found something greater - “Jehovah is my rock, my fortress and my shelter.” And we see that this is our first picture of how we stand against the enemy.

### **RESIST THE ENEMY BY STANDING FIRM**

Do we have a Rock? Do we know the Rock of our salvation? Do we have a hiding place, a place that we can go and flee from the enemy? This is our first warfare against the enemy.

Let us keep that little picture in our mind as we go to Ephesians 6. Notice how Paul tells them to stand in this noble war: “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil... 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” (vss. 11, 13). And then note the beginning of verse 14: “Stand firm.”

Now here comes the devil like a roaring lion to attack us, and he roars something fierce. What should we do? Stand firm. That is how we fight. Now is it you or me standing firm against the devil? There is no question about it; he can beat *us* in a wrestling match. Oh, but we are standing in the Rock. We are putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, the full armor of God.

Verse 10 says, “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” This will enable us to, as it says in verse 13, stand in the evil day, which means the warfare is very difficult sometimes. The enemy is threatening us, circling around us. It is an evil day. Even though we have been trusting God, it seems as though He is not answering our prayers. What should we do? Stand *in* the Rock.

We have that wonderful verse in James 4:7b: “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” This is an amazing promise—resist and he will flee. We do not run away, but we stand, and *he* will go away. But we need to remember also what it says in James 4:6, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

### **THE ACCUSER OF THE BRETHREN**

Now we are standing in the Rock that is Christ; we are in the Rock of our salvation. And here comes the enemy, trying to draw us out of our position in the victory of Christ. What evil scheme does he use to do it? He accuses us night and day.

In Revelation 12:10, speaking of the enemy, it says, “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.”

The very word *Satan* literally means “adversary.” Satan stands before God and accuses us: “He is a sinner. She is a sinner. Look at this; look at that.” He is very busy. He has many things to point out twenty-four hours, seven days a week. He has no day off—not even for Christmas. He is always accusing, accusing, accusing. He wants to draw us out; he wants to condemn us. He wants to cause us to doubt so he accuses us; but we overcome. How? Well, we could tell him, “No, no, no. We did not sin.” If we say that, then the devil will surely eat us up for his lunch. We cannot stand on our own righteousness. But listen to verse 11: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.” Now, there is no more accusation because Jesus washed our sins away on the cross. He sprinkled our hearts clean from an evil conscience. And in the blood of His new covenant is the promise: “I will remember their sins no more” (see Hebrews 8:12b). Satan keeps accusing, but God says, “There is no sin in my children.”

### **THE ROCK OF OUR SALVATION**

But we need to stay in the Rock. The enemy can get us if we get out from under the covering of the precious blood. It is like the Passover. You are in the house, the blood is on the door, and you are under the blood. When the enemy comes and sees the blood, he must pass over you. But there is that warning: “Do not leave the house. Stay in the Rock of your salvation!”

If we could only believe what the word of God tells us—and we must believe—and if we could only believe the things we think we know, what a wonderful, victorious life we would live! “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand; all other ground is sinking sand.” We sing the words, but do we believe?

Are you in the Rock? He is your salvation. He has applied His precious blood on you, beloved child. It is His precious blood! Oh, value that salvation. Stand in that place, and know that the

enemy cannot touch you because you are under the blood of the Lamb. Do you have such a hiding place? It is possible to become uncovered through sin. If we get in that condition, the devil will nip at our heels. It is such a tragedy to see God's children go into the darkness and see how the enemy buffets them about. So this is the first and vital lesson of spiritual, noble warfare—stand in that hiding place. Live in the refuge of the Rock. This is our victory. David often fled to this rock, and later in his life, he often fled to the Rock of his salvation—Jehovah.

### **VICTORY THROUGH INQUIRING OF THE LORD**

Let's look at the second picture of our war. We know that David was not only a soldier but also a king. You cannot remain a soldier if you stay in the cave all your life, and so David had to walk in the victory of Jehovah. But knowing that David was beloved by God, as soon as David became king and began to walk in his royal calling, the enemy immediately attacked.

We have a picture of this in II Samuel 5:17: "When the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek out David; and when David heard of it, he went down to the rock."

The Philistines, who were the enemies of God, were trying to attack David. As soon as they found out he was king—as soon as the enemy finds out you are a child of the King—he comes to attack. Now what did David do? He went to the stronghold, and it says in verse 18: "Now the Philistines came and spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim. Then David inquired of the Lord, saying, 'Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You give them into my hand?' And Jehovah said to David, 'Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand.'"

#### ***God Said 'Go'***

We must take note of this: when the attack came, David went to his secret place and inquired of the Lord. How is that for a battle strategy? When the enemy attacks you, do you immediately attack him, or do you talk to the Lord? Do you say, "Lord, should I go?" And the Lord says, "Go up!" Let's look at what happened.

Verse 20: "So David came to Baal-perazim and defeated them there; and he said, 'The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like the breakthrough of waters.' Therefore he named that place Baal-perazim. They abandoned their idols there, so David and his men carried them away."

As we look at this name, Baal-perazim, it will give us some insight into the battle. When David went up with his armies, he caught them by surprise. The Lord "broke through"—meaning there was a sudden happening, and they were so caught off guard that they left their idols behind. This was a huge army of Philistines, but when David attacked them, they were taken completely by surprise and they fled, leaving their idols behind. What a loss it was for the Philistines to leave their idols behind, and they were ashamed. Now they had to go back and fight just to get their idols back.

#### ***God Said 'Wait'***

So here they come again, as we see in verse 22: "Now the Philistines came up once again and spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim." And when David inquired of the Lord this time, He did not say, "Go up!" He said, "Wait."

Eighty percent of our spiritual battle is waiting. And David knew that it was not by might or power but by the Spirit. So, with the enemy sitting right there he waited. Of course, the enemy was ready for him to attack, but instead, he went around behind them.

We see this in verse 23: “When David inquired of the Lord, He said, ‘You shall not go directly up; circle around behind them and come at them in front of the balsam trees. It shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then you shall [attack] act promptly, for then the Lord will have gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines.’ Then David did so, just as Jehovah had commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer.”

It is difficult for us to appreciate this story the way it is written in English. David and his armies circled around behind them, but the Philistines were waiting there with their chariots and spears, looking and looking: “Where is he? Where is he?” Then they began to get afraid; and they heard a sound in the trees. It was the army of the Lord—angels—rustling the trees. And the Philistines were saying, “Oh, what is going on?” Then David came behind and struck them down. The Lord got the victory, and David knew that it was the Lord’s victory.

Doesn’t this remind you of the great battle against Sennacherib? Isaiah and Hezekiah were in Jerusalem, and Sennacherib said, “We are going to destroy all of you. Just quit now and open the gates!” But Isaiah and Hezekiah prayed, and the Bible says, “The angel of the Lord slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand soldiers of Assyria” (see II Kings 19:35).

Now, I would like to do battle like that, wouldn’t you? This is a pretty good victory! You just sit in the cave, watch television, and God does all the work! Well, no, it is not that simple. But we can have the victory if we will follow the Lord. How important this is!

### **THE ENEMY’S FIERY DARTS**

Now we want to apply this story in Ephesians 6:16. When it comes to this warfare and wrestling, it only mentions in verse 16 one thing that the enemy actually does. He shoots us with fiery darts. This is one of the enemy’s strategies. He wants to attack us with a fiery dart, and it pierces our heart. It could be an accusation, a temptation, a sudden trial. Through all of these strategies, he wants to unsettle you and frighten you.

#### ***Darts of Temptations***

Let us bear in mind Paul’s exhortation to Timothy: “Flee youthful lusts.” Now you know we are to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh; but as we are walking, the enemy attacks us with a fiery dart. He wants to draw us out of our place in Christ. And so the first place he often attacks is our physical body with a sudden temptation. Maybe you are walking down the street singing, “On Christ the solid rock I stand.” Suddenly, even as you are thinking about the rock, you see a peach which means “a pretty girl” in America. All of a sudden, a thought, a temptation or a lust comes into your mind, and you feel you have sinned. No, you have been tempted. God does not tempt, but we are tempted when we are drawn out by our own lusts. What do you do about it? Do you just let it go down into the heart? Or, do you say, “Lord, I plead the blood of Jesus Christ. I do not want these thoughts”? Thoughts can get in the way of brothers and sisters in their walk with the Lord. None of us are beyond the temptations that can come to us as darts; but we do not have to live with them. We thank the Lord for His cleansing blood.

#### ***Darts to the Mind***

Then there are darts to the mind, and they often come as sudden attacks. We may be just walking along, and suddenly curse words come into our head. An evil thought comes into our head—many times without warning; but it unsettles us.

I remember speaking some years ago to a young Christian, whom the enemy continually attacked by flooding his mind with curse words. And this young believer felt condemned. Sometimes, even in the worship meeting, these curse words would flood in. So he asked me: “What should I do?”

And I said, “Do you hate those curse words or do you love them?”

He said, “I hate them.”

Then I said this: “They are not from you; they are from the enemy. Resist those words! Every time they come, immediately give praise to God. Tell the Lord that these thoughts have been injected into your mind, but you love Him with all your heart.” And within two weeks, there was no more problem.”

Every time he shoots these words into our mind, if we respond by praising the Lord, he will not do that for very long.

### *Darts of Doubt*

On the other hand, the enemy may shoot darts of doubt into you. It could even be in a meeting like this, and suddenly you say, “You know, I do not believe this.” Sometimes he throws a sudden suggestion to do something just in the flesh which is wrong. Young people have to watch this all the time. You might be on the internet, and a wrong site comes up. Don’t say, “Let me just check this out; it is a website about Adam and Eve. What could be wrong with that?” But these darts of the enemy would attack our thoughts.

### *Attack on Our Emotions*

Our emotions are also susceptible to attack, especially when we are selfish or self-centered and needy. There are times in our walk that we suddenly sense fear gripping us. Then we panic, and we worry and worry and worry about something that comes to nothing. Sometimes we suddenly feel all alone, forgotten by God and forsaken. We become offended by God or His people.

We read earlier in 2 Corinthians 2:10 where Paul makes reference to the schemes of the devil. This is what happened. There was a brother who had to be disciplined in Corinth, and they told him he could not take the Lord’s Table, or they placed some measure of limitation upon him. So Paul tells them, in regard to that brother, to forgive him. Paul had forgiven him, and now this brother needed to be restored because the enemy could place a dart in his heart—that he has been forsaken by God. Even brethren going through discipline should not feel they are forsaken by God. These are the enemy’s schemes.

### *Attack on Our Will*

Then he likes to attack our will. In our walk in the Lord, the enemy comes with a double-edged sword to paralyze you from serving. You may be working long hours on the job, but you always feel guilty: “I should be studying the word of God.” So then you get laid off, and you are studying the word of God. The enemy comes to you and says, “You should be working.” You cannot win! Or, maybe you are serving the Lord, but you feel: “I should rest.” Then you go on vacation and you feel guilty: “I should be serving.” If you spend time going to a meeting, you

might hear a voice saying: “You should be home with your family.” The next week you stay home with your family, and you cannot enjoy it because you feel you should be at the meeting. You spend time with your family, and a voice tells you should be witnessing to your neighbour. Do you see how this works? Whatever you do, he makes you feel guilty about it. He has a two-edged sword, and anything you say, he chops it the other way. These are the fiery darts of the enemy.

### **GOD’S PROVISION AGAINST THE FIERY DARTS**

However, we have a provision against all his fiery darts. Not only do we have the shield of faith to quench these darts, but all of the armor of God is our provision. These darts have no effect if we are girded with truth. We have the breastplate of righteousness and the blood of Jesus. We have the helmet of salvation on our head. If we have the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, if we know the gospel and have on the gospel shoes, what can he do? This is the Lord’s provision. Put on the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. He continues to shoot the darts, but they just bounce off. The enemy is such a liar. He makes those darts look so big, but they are all lies. The devil cannot tell you the truth without lying. He always twists something.

Or maybe the Spirit of God is convicting you of sin, but the enemy tries to make conviction condemnation by twisting it. The Spirit of God convicts you and says, “That is a sin.” But the devil condemns you and says, “You are guilty. You are no good.” Therefore, we must not only live in the Rock, we must not only walk in the full armor, but there is one more thing that we must do. We must be careful for unguarded moments.

### **UNGUARDED MOMENTS**

Paul says to young Timothy in I Timothy 4:16: “Be careful for yourself and for your ministry.” We must be careful of enemy attacks. And here we have one more example of David. You will recall the story of his unguarded moment, when he was up on the rooftop of his house. It was time for him to fight the noble fight, but he stayed at home. He had pride in his heart. He was a soldier but he was not fighting. As a result of that, he was bored, and it gave an opportunity for the enemy. He committed adultery and then killed a man. He hurt the testimony of God because of an unguarded moment.

### ***Servants of God***

Now I want to speak especially to those of you who serve the Lord. The enemy hates servants of God, and he will try to find an unguarded moment in your life. We see it even in the life of our Lord in the wilderness when He was tempted by Satan. Jesus was hungry and tired after fasting forty days. It was then that the enemy came to tempt Him—and they were real temptations. What were the issues? We find that these also apply to the servants of God. If you serve God, the enemy will tell you to take stones and make bread out of them—use your gift and your authority to make money. Many servants of God have gone astray using their gifts. With one side of their mouth, they preach the word of God, but with the other side of their mouth they become a super salesman of a big company, and all kind of stuff like this. They use their gift for their own satisfaction.

Jesus was tempted by the devil to jump off the top of the temple. How servants of God are tempted to show off, to do things that will gain a following. “Just do something dramatic; stand

out above the rest.” And there are many servants of God, it is so sad to say, who have built some kind of a work based on some extravagant doctrine or experience. If you are a faithful servant of God, the devil will come to you and say: “I will give you a kingdom for a price.” Does every man have a price? Can we be bought? The enemy says, “Just bow down. I will give you a kingdom.” Many times there are ministries which are compromised just this way.

In these last days, there will be many ways to gather a following and make a fortune in false religion. Can we be bought? We thank God that Paul could not be bought. His life could have been so easy if he had just compromised. “Okay, okay, we will circumcise the Gentiles.” There would have been no more opposition. But he refused to compromise. When the Gentiles’ freedom was in jeopardy, Paul came to the rescue and stood for them to stand in their liberty and not be yoked in the bondage of religion. Because he would not compromise, Paul spent ten years in prison.

Oh, how careful we need to be in our unguarded moments! The enemy comes with a deal we cannot refuse; but by the grace of God we remain a good soldier. We suffer hardship rather than go the easy road, faithful to our Lord, and thus receive a crown of righteousness. Let us be good soldiers of Jesus Christ in His armor—outstanding, noble, and hidden in Him. May the Lord have mercy.

*Our Father, we come to You and thank You that You are calling good soldiers. There is nobody who has such a position as we have to be in the Rock of the great Warrior who is King of kings and Lord of lords. But we want to walk in the full armor of God and to walk in the victory of Calvary. Oh, cleanse us by Thy precious blood from all sin that would give the enemy any advantage over us. We want to fight the noble fight, run the course, and keep the faith for the sake of our General, Jesus Christ. Amen.*