

Finishing Well

Lesson #16

Call To Battle

May 4, 2022

J.C. Ryle "It does cost something to be a real Christian, according to the standard of the Bible. There are enemies to be overcome, battles to be fought, sacrifices to be made, an Egypt to be forsaken, a wilderness to be passed through, a cross to be carried..."

Many Christians are defeated in their Christian lives because they are not seriously engaged in the warfare to which they are called. "The saddest symptom about many so-called Christians is the utter absence of anything like conflict and fight in their Christianity. They go through the motions of attending religious services each week, but of the great spiritual warfare-- its watchings and strugglings, its agonies and anxieties, its battles and contests,-- of all this they appear to know nothing at all. [Soldiers and Trumpeters," Home Truths]

Apostle Paul The Christian life is nothing less than warfare against the hideous enemy that Luther called "the prince of darkness grim."

When Paul was in Ephesus, he wrote [I Cor. 16:9],

"for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries."

- Adversaries go along with open doors for effective ministry.

When you were born again, you were enlisted in a war.

R.C. Sproul: The great triad for Christian growth contains the world, the flesh and the devil.

- War against the world as you fight against being conformed to its pattern.

The world is the system around us that is opposed to God, that caters to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. [I John 2:15-17]

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

- War With Your Flesh, As You Fight Against Sin

Your old nature inherited from Adam. It is opposed to God and can do nothing to please Him.

I Pet. 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

John Piper: A Christian is not a person who experiences NO bad desires.

A Christian is a person who is at WAR with those desires by the POWER of the Spirit.

CONFLICT in your soul is not all bad. Even though we long for the day when our flesh will be utterly defunct and only pure and loving desires will fill our hearts, yet there is something worse than the war within between flesh and Spirit;

namely, NO WAR within because the flesh controls the citadel and all the outposts.

PRAISE GOD for the war within! Serenity in sin is DEATH. The Spirit has landed to do BATTLE with the flesh. So take heart if your soul feels like a BATTLEFIELD at times.

The sign of whether you are indwelt by the Spirit is NOT that you have no bad desires, but that you are at WAR with them!

Recall: Ex. 17:8-9 Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

Amalek = 24x Amalekites = 27x > 51 total times

Amalek = Warlike Young's Concordance
 A Strangler of the People Hebrew & English Bible Concordance

⁹ And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

Consider: Israel won the victory that day, BUT that does not mean there will not be other battles to win.

Ex. 17:16 Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

Deut. 25:17-19 Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; ¹⁸ How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.

There is a perpetual fight with a perpetual enemy, the flesh, that would keep you and withstand you if he could from entering into the land of fullness and fruitfulness and satisfaction called Canaan, the Promised Land, the Abundant Life.

Gal. 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

- You cannot eradicate it, but you can always have victory over it.

Gal. 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Quote: The flesh will attack you in your weakest place.

God will test you in your strongest place.

Spurgeon: Self-sufficiency is Satan's net where he catches men, like poor, silly fish, and destroys them.

- War with the devil, as you fight against powers and principalities and rulers of the darkness. [Eph 6:10-13]

Eph. 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

J. I. Packer: Like it or not, each of us is personally at war with the devil, for the devil has declared war on each of us.

Key: Spiritual battles are not natural and require supernatural spiritual strength.

Eph. 5:18 Be continually filled with or controlled by the Spirit.

Gal. 5:16 Be continually walking in the Spirit so that we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

- The result is supernatural strength for a supernatural life.

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Strong Christians Must Be Dressed For Battle

II Cor. 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Divine armor - how God dresses when He goes to war

- Like a warrior going out to battle, the Lord girded Himself for the conflict!

Isa. 11:5 Righteousness will be the belt about His loins [hips] and faithfulness the belt about His waist.

Isa. 59:17 For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon His head; and He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

Standing Firm Against The Enemy Is The Result Of Putting On God's Full Armor.

Eph. 6:11 Put on the WHOLE ARMOR of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Wake up, look in your spiritual closet before you go about your day. Ah, I don't need it.

This is why we fall into temptation, sin defeats us, we fail to obey God's commands.

We rely on God's strength and use His armor, but we must take the initiative to put on the armor and stand firm in the battle because we love and are submitted to Jesus Christ.

It's not a matter of "letting go and letting God," where you are passive and God does it all. Nor is it a matter of gritting your teeth and doing it yourself, with occasional assistance from God.

Rather, it is a blending of His power and our striving.

Col. 1:29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

To be a strong Christian, I need divine equipment and divine energy.

- Divine commandment always brings Divine enablement.

"Stand," a key word, is repeated in verses 11, 13, and 14.

Eph. 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Resist or withstand comes from a Greek compound word from the root, "to stand," meaning literally to stand against. It's a military term for holding on to a position that is under attack. It implies the courage to hold your ground because of your allegiance to King Jesus, even when others may be fleeing from the battle because the enemy seems so strong.

Letter from missionary in the jungles of New Guinea: Man, it is great to be in the thick of the fight, to draw the old devil's heaviest guns, to have him at you with depression and discouragement, slander, disease. He doesn't waste time on a lukewarm bunch. He hits good and hard when a fellow is hitting him. You can always measure the weight of your blow by the one you get back. When you're on your back with fever and at your last ounce of strength, when some of your converts backslide, when you learn that your most promising inquirers are only fooling, when your mail gets held up, and some don't bother to answer your letters, is that the

time to put on mourning? No sir. That's the time to pull out the stops and shout Hallelujah! The old fellow's getting it in the neck and hitting back. Heaven is leaning over the battlements and watching. "Will he stick with it?" As they see who is with us, as they see the unlimited reserves, the boundless resources, as they see the impossibility of failure, how disgusted and sad they must be when we run away. Glory to God! We're not going to run away. We're going to stand!

Shammah, one of David's mighty men, illustrates standing firm in the battle.

II Sam. 23:11-12 "And the Philistines were gathered into a troop where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the people fled from the Philistines. But he took his stand in the midst of the plot, defended it and slew the Philistines; and the Lord brought about a great victory." It must have been harvest time when those soldiers showed up because the field was full of people, busy about getting their crops in. They were working and unprepared for a fight.

Kolenda: Stand In Your Pea Patch

Perhaps it was an ordinary day in Israel. The people were going about their daily business as usual. On the outskirts of the city, in a remote field, a group of laborers was harvesting a meager crop of peas. Suddenly a shadow fell on that pea patch from the hills as hundreds of Philistine soldiers appeared, armed in full battle gear. Fear struck the hearts of the people. These farmers were mere peasants, armed only with spades, hoes, and other agricultural tools. They knew they had no chance against a professional army. Remaining in that field would mean almost certain death. They looked down at their pea patch situated on an insignificant plot of land, and they realized that it was not worth risking life and limb to defend that ground. They dropped their farming tools and ran for their lives. The enemy found no opposition.

Unfortunately for the Philistines there was one man in the field that day who was not just a peasant or a farmer—he was a warrior. He was one of David's "mighty men."

- Because of his allegiance to David, Shammah stood firm and he fought, but the Lord brought the victory.

Key Point: Mind in the Beginning What Matters in the End

Shammah understood something about the tactics of warfare. Maybe this field was nothing but an ordinary pea patch, but this attack was not random—it was highly strategic.

Perhaps the Philistines had chosen this pea patch because they thought no one would bother to defend such a worthless field and they could take it without a battle.

But on this piece of land the Philistines would establish a stronghold and a base of operations from which they could launch future attacks on the nation of Israel.

Shammah knew that if he compromised this little pea patch, soon the enemy would be kicking down his front door. He was fiercely determined not to give up one inch to the Philistines.

When the enemy comes to assault your life, he is not going to start with the thing you are most diligent over. He is going to attack your pea patch: that thing he figures you will not bother to defend and where he thinks you will compromise.

And in that compromise, he will establish a stronghold to take over your life.

If we can defend even the smallest, most insignificant pea patches in our lives, the enemy will not be able to gain a foothold.

The more territory you give up now, the more you're going to have take back later. Somewhere along the way you've got to stop retreating. Sooner or later you've got to join the battle.

The Christian's enemy is not concerned about unproductive fields or the wastelands of sins. Our enemy is focused on what is spiritually working and what is doctrinally sound. Our enemy is at war against fields that are producing for the Lord and have the potential for a rich harvest. Defending the pea-patch might have seemed rather insignificant to onlookers or to others who didn't value the field - but to King David, he placed Shammah in his Top 3 Mighty Men.

What Shammah did required courage, faithfulness and initiative:

Courage: He took his stand in the middle of the field.

Faithfulness: He defended it.

Initiative: He struck the Philistines down.

Then comes the victory: "And the Lord brought about a great victory."

What made the difference? One man who refused to run away.

One man turned the tide of battle and through him, God brought about a great victory.

Eph. 6:11, 13-14a Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore...

II Tim. 2:3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

The Roman soldiers of Paul's day were the toughest, most disciplined, and most resourceful soldiers in the world. They marched 20 miles a day with 50 pounds of gear.

When not in battle, they practiced for battle, plus they built roads and public buildings.

Roman soldiers were multi-talented-they threw javelins, used short swords in battle, but most could also swim across rivers and moats to get to an enemy, climb walls, shoot arrows, ride horses and operate Roman war machines. Roman soldiers were the national police force to maintain the peace by enforcing Roman law. Soldiers were everywhere in the empire.

Spurgeon: Paul does not exhort Timothy to be a common, or ordinary soldier, but to be a 'good soldier of Jesus Christ;' for all soldiers, and all true soldiers, may not be good soldiers.

There are men who are but just soldiers and nothing more; they only need sufficient temptation and they readily become cowardly, idle, useless and worthless; but he is the good soldier who is bravest of the brave, courageous at all times, who is zealous, does his duty with heart and earnestness.

The image of soldiering paints a passionate picture for each believer to pursue.

What does your Commander require? Instant obedience to His orders, deep loyalty, rigid self-discipline, bold in speaking out and valor in defense of the truth.

These qualities should characterize each one of Christ's servants and remind us that the path of devotion to Christ is not easy or instant; it is long and difficult.

Never Give Up: Shammah strategically positioned himself in the middle of the field.

Many people who were called to a particular field lost their focus. They became distracted and wandered to the fringes of their field. Sometimes they even drifted into other fields they were never called to serve. If you are going to remain in the center of God's will for your life, you must resolve to stand in the middle of the field to which He has called you and remain focused without allowing the enemy to distract you from that call.

For Shammah there were two options: win or die! He stood his ground, he defended that pea patch, "The Lord wrought a great victory."

Stand in your field and fight until God gives the victory.

- This requires a quality that few seem to possess — perseverance.

Christian Soldiers Live With Endurance, Perseverance

Calvin: "Have you thrown away your spear? Are you a believer who made a great show of valor, but now are more concerned about your comfort, convenience and safety? If you have thrown your spear away and are living for comfort, you have become effeminate in the faith."

A good soldier doesn't quit because he faces a difficult task or a dangerous situation.

He knows his life is expendable and he must be prepared to lay it down when required.

Gal. 6:19 And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Heb. 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience [endurance; perseverance] the race that is set before us,

- The enemy is a master of using sin to discourage, disappoint, and destroy us.
- Discouragement is strong. If the enemy can convince you something is impossible, he wins.

Phil. 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

- God will fill in all your "not enoughs" with His abundant provision.

Rom. 5:3-4 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; ⁴ And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

Consider: When you face difficult things in your life, you always have a choice.

You have the option of giving up or you can choose to grow.

When you choose to keep going through the tough stuff, your character changes.

You become stronger, more steadfast, more confident, and, ultimately, full of hope.

Truth: Endurance doesn't just change the end result I am working toward; it changes who I am becoming.

Key: Giving up entirely is the only way to fail. Keep Going To Be Transformed

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

³ Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

⁴ But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Key Point: Perseverance changes your character. It's not just about crossing the finish line, it's about *who you are* when you do. You are maturing with each and every step. Every time you choose to move forward, even when things are difficult, you are growing in faith.

Why am I running a race of faith?

Col.3:23-24 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Consider: You will always be disappointed if you are only working to win other peoples' attention, admiration, and approval.

Paul: As you mature, you will overcome man-pleasing.

Gal. 1:10 "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."

Working for the Lord adds a deeper purpose to every single task in your life.

It's no longer just about the checks on your to-do list.

It's about maturing and being transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

You don't just usher, you put Christ on display with your words and actions.

You don't merely greet, you graciously take people where they need to go.

You don't merely teach, you study intensely to give the meaning and theology of the text.

Endurance Leads To Hope

Rom. 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

Many people in the Bible faced impossibly difficult situations. Yet, they made the choice to keep moving forward in faith, without knowing what the outcome would be.

Job: There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God.

- Faced heartbreakingly difficult situations and praised God in the midst of them.
- God greatly rewarded Job for his faith.

Paul: Frequently imprisoned, beaten, shipwrecked and more. He chose to praise God and continue his work.

II Cor. 4:7-10 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. ⁸ We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of endurance.

He did nothing wrong and endured adversity, pain, and hardship...all for us.

- There are so many more - David, Jacob, Abraham, Joseph, Jeremiah, Ruth

When you feel like quitting, find inspiration in these people who persevered in faith, clinging to hope every step of the way.

Col. 1:9-12 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet [fit] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

- It's in His strength that you can endure and be patient. He will carry you through.

Shift your focus to an eternal perspective

II Cor. 4:16-18 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.

The Secret Ingredient: Perseverance

The word persevere is made of the prefix per, which means "through," and severe. Victory comes to those who press through severe battles to the other side without quitting.

You can be extraordinarily gifted, talented, anointed, and blessed, but without persistence you will have little impact because the great victories are always on the other side of great battles. Maturity and effective ministry require steadfast endurance and abiding faith. To effectively flee sin and pursue Christlike character, to minister greatly, serve diligently, disciple aggressively, teach clearly—then you must have a soldier's mentality.

Marshall Foch, a French general in World War I, commanded an officer,

"You must not retire, you must hold at all costs."

"Then," said the officer, "that means we must die." Foch answered, "Precisely!"

II Sam. 23:10 Eleazar fought so long and so hard in one battle that his hand froze to the sword. Perseverance is not an option; it is an imperative. If Eleazar or Shammah would have let go of their swords or stopped fighting, the enemy would have killed them.

- If you let go of God's calling, you will never fulfill it.

My part is to obey and stand firm until God gives the victory. May we stand in our respective fields as David's mighty men did, prepared to fight to the death for God's kingdom. When the day comes for us to leave this world, I pray that the sword will have to be pried out of our lifeless fingers. At the end may we not be found sitting in front of a television, but may we be found with our boots strapped on in the field where God has assigned us. Never give up! Never retreat! Never surrender to the enemy! Stand! Fight! Endure to the end.