

OUR BATTLE

Our President reminds us often that we are in a war against terrorism. Under that banner our country has gone into battle against two countries and against numerous non-governmental groups that we believe foment terror against the United States and against innocents throughout the world. The War on Terror has been, and will continue to be, costly. Thousands of Americans have been wounded or killed and billions of dollars have been expended in the effort. As one would expect, many are questioning whether the battle is worth it, whether the dangers are real and whether we ought spend the money and the sacrifice the lives. That decision is ultimately a political question not worthy of discussion here. But it does serve as an introduction to war that is real and whose stakes are enormous.

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:17)

Paul here encourages Timothy to be a warrior, to involve himself faithfully in a battle so that the outcome will be favorable. Like the national War on Terror, our War On Evil is against a specific foe: the Devil. Peter calls him our “*adversary*” (1 Peter 5:8) and as a “*child of the devil*” one who is an “*enemy of righteousness* (Acts 13:10). Likewise, the “*enemies of the cross of Christ*” are those who cause division within the body of Christ and draw men away. Our enemies are real.

Terrorists are different from the soldiers we are more accustomed to fighting, they are cowardly and are unconcerned about who is injured or killed. Likewise, our enemy is different from what we might expect. Paul writes that “*we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Ephesians 6:12). To fight against a foe that we can see would be far easier, but such is not our lot. We must make war against the unseen, against influences, against attitudes and ideas. We battle a real foe in Satan who uses weapons that cannot be seen.

Although unseen, we do know how he operates. Paul says that we “*are not ignorant of his devices...*” (2 Corinthians 2:11). Just as good intelligence is essential in the war on terror, so too is an understanding of Satan’s techniques, abilities and limitations. We know that Satan lies (John 8:44) and that Satan tempts (Matthew 4:1-11), but we also know that he is limited and that he cannot force us to sin (1 Corinthians 10:13). Nevertheless, his influence is strong and, at this point in human history, he has been completely successful in encouraging every man to sin save one (Romans 3:23; Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 9:28).

We have often been told that in the terrorism fight, nations not with us are against us. The President probably lifted that line from James who wrote, “*Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*” (James 4:4). There is no middle ground in our battle. One either stands with Christ or he sleeps with the devil.

Finally, we know the stakes in this battle are high, unbelievably high. In the War on Terror, the American way of life is threatened. Our system of democracy, our belief systems and our immense financial well-being are at stake. But against the Devil, our very souls are threatened. If we allow Satan to win, we will join him in a place prepared (Revelation 20:9-10). Let us show our allegiance to God’s kingdom that is here and now in place. Faithful service to the present kingdom assures us of a place in heavenly kingdom to come.

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