



The Fight Of Your Life

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2 Corinthians 1:8 10 - "8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:" "9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:" "10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;"

2 Corinthians 10:3 5 - "3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:" "4(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;"

I. INTRODUCTION - THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

- -Of late, I have found myself drawn back to a little book that I read several years ago. I have been re-reading portions of Pilgrim's Progress written by John Bunyan. It was written in the 1600's by this preacher who was locked in prison because of his preaching during his day.
- -There is one particular scene in the book where that Christian begins to descend into the Valley of Humiliation. He will have to travel this particular path alone. In this region of travel, he actually will begin to travel through a series of valleys.

A. Apollyon, The Enemy

- -In this valley, he will battle Apollyon. The name Apollyon is from the Hebrew equivalent Abaddon and both in this context are known as "destroyer."
- -He is a hideous monster. He was covered with scales like a fish (of this he was very proud). He has wings like a dragon and feet like a bear. From his belly belched fire and smoke.
- -His whole intent is to destroy Christian in the path of his journey.

B. A Dialogue with the Devil

- -The fight is fraught with danger, subterfuge, malice, and hatred directed toward Christian. The early stages of the fight starts with a dialogue with the devil. He enquires of some things from Christian:
- Where did you come from and where are you going?
- Why have you fled from your earthly and fleshly king?
- As the conversation starts, Apollyon attempts to market a deal. He wants to barter with Christian's soul.
- "Everything that you have left to start toward the Celestial City, I will give it back to you. All of the material things in the City of Destruction will be yours. Trade what you can see for something that you cannot see. I will give you the services and the wages from the City of Destruction in exchange for your soul."
- This is the constant work of the enemy. He wants men to trade things in:
 - Trade your birthright.
 - Trade your convictions.
 - Trade your purity.
 - Trade your devotion.
 - Trade your doctrine.
 - Trade your prayer.
 - Trade your hunger for revival.
 - Trade your desire for heaven.

- Trade your faith.
- Trade your soul.
- The confrontation continues with a war of words. Whether Apollyon's subjects are aware of it or not they are nothing more than slaves to sin. They have no rights or liberty. . . but this never becomes evident until they attempt to leave.
- -Apollyon:
 - • A masterful liar.
 - He employs deception.
 - He manipulates every morsel of truth.
 - He blinds the minds of men.
 - He owns a deadly web of deceit.
 - He works with seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.
- -William Shakespeare wrote into King Lear a line that goes like this: "The prince of darkness is a gentleman."

C. The Accuser of the Brethren

- -When the seemingly diplomatic dialogue does not work with collapsing Christian's morals, then Apollyon starts to accuse Christian. This should not be strange to us for Scripture very clearly designates the enemy of the soul as an accuser of the brethren.
- -He accuses him:
 - • You almost fainted in the Slough of Despond.
 - You tried to get rid of the burden of sin the wrong way.
 - You slept and lost valuable treasures along the path.
 - You almost turned back from the teeth of the lion.
 - You talk of the past journey and boastfully describe what you have accomplished.
- -He capitalizes on accusations and catalogues all of the past sins. Then Apollyon realizes that this is not working. . . . So he launches into a fierce rage against the Lord.
- -Christian responds back to him and informs him to be careful in his extreme rage against the Lord. He also tells Apollyon that he is traveling in the King's Highway which is the way of holiness.
- -Apollyon spreads his hideous frame and attempts to obstruct the path. We must always resist the devil no matter where the path of life finds him.

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

1 Timothy 6:12 - "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 Peter 5:8-9 - "8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" "9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

- -But there is one particular Scripture that brings more light to exactly what we are to do. James 4:7 - "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
- -The Greek word for "resist" is ANTHISTEMI. In this verse the indication is that means that we are not to resist for a while and then rest. It is an absolute command to solidify or fix a position, to set yourself against, and continually oppose the enemy. No allowance is made for slacking off.
- -You must fight with your eyes open.
- Robert Louis Stevenson - "You cannot run away from a weakness; you must sometime fight it out or perish, and if that be so, why not now, and where you stand?"

D. The Fight of Your Life

- -At this point, the battle begins. Flaming arrows are flung in his direction. The "deadly darts" of the devil are shot with sinister precision in an attempt to wound Christian's heart. But Christian fends off the attack with the Shield of Faith.
- -But then in a flaming wrath, the assault becomes tremendous. The flaming darts soon find their marks. The blasphemies soon find their marks and Christian is wounded.

- • The Wounded Hand - He is unable to hold his Sword and so it drops to the ground. This is symbolic of the loss of faith.
- • The Wounded Foot - He is unable to walk circumspectly and behave wisely. This is symbolic of his loss of the walk of holiness.
- • The Wounded Head - He is unable to think clearly. He is confused and filled with doubt. This is symbolic of the loss of understanding.
- Of all the wounds that he is struck with perhaps the worst is the wounded head. His wounds weaken him and they appear to be mortal and life slowly ebbs away from him. He is choked with confusion and slumps to the ground in shock and self-reproach buffets him.
- -At this point, Christian finds himself in the weary place that others before him and others after him have found themselves at. Two things can happen at this place in the battle:
 - • Some are entrapped in false doctrine and become hopelessly lost.
 - • Others find an entrance back into the old life and seek a worldly habit to sooth them.
 - It is crucial that we understand what to do when we are wounded and battle weary.
- -As he slumps to the ground, Apollyon approaches and moves in for the final blow. Somehow in all of the fighting that occurs, Christian is able to retrieve the sword that has been lost and he manages to wield it in the direction of Apollyon.
- -The Lord never fails us in our darkest hours.

Micah 7:8 - *"8 Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me."*

- -When the Sword of Christian reigns this blow on Apollyon he is wounded and has to retreat backwards. With this Christian rises to his feet again and starts the pursuit. His sword flashes again:

Romans 8:37 39 - *"37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." "38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come," "39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

- -The Greek word for "more than conquerors" is HUPERNIKAO. This word indicates an exceedingly and abundant victory over the foes of the soul. We are not just survivors, we are more than conquerors over sin, the flesh, and the devil. It doesn't just mean that we win victories over the tests and assaults of this life, it means that we are better off for having fought through them.
- • We have more faith.
 - We have more love for the Lord.
 - We have more joy.
 - We have more patient endurance.
 - We have silenced our adversaries.
 - We have put the enemy to shame.
 - We retrieve others from the path of hell.
 - We become more than Conquerors through Jesus Christ.
- -God fights for us as long as we stand and face the enemy.

II. CONCLUSION - A WITCH'S INVITATION - CARMEN

- One peaceful afternoon I picked up from my mailbox the strangest looking letter I'd ever seen. A chilling little envelope bordered with flying bats and eerie serpents whose eyes were tinted green. The letter was addressed to me so as I opened it, I froze.
- What I read turned my complexion three shades of blue. It said, "My name is Isaac Horowitz. I am a male witch, a warlock and I feel a need to spend some time with you." Now as a Christian from a little church with God's call on my life, a man of faith and power with a challenge to grow, I did what any saint would do in my situation. I tore it up and said, "Lord no way am I gonna go."
- Then gently and methodically the Holy Spirit spoke and reminded me we are God's voice to our nation and it's the church's responsibility to witness, so reluctantly I accepted this witch's invitation.
- He had the house you would expect. The old English cottage that seemed that it would harbor nightmares right to the core. The overgrown ivy, the gate that creaked when opened, somehow you would expect a monster to be

the butler.

- The doorbell rang, a hollow gong, and the knob twisted open and Isaac stood before me with a grin. His jet black hair and well trimmed beard flowed with his black silk clothes. My skin crawled as he said, "Please come on in."
- His house was filled with every occultic symbol you could fathom. Hanging pentagrams and horoscope signs. A Ouija board and dungeons and dragons game set on the table. A crystal ball with an incandescent shine. Then graciously he handed me some steaming herbal tea and it's presence caused my memory to jog. I thought about every horror story that I had ever heard when I was a kid and thought "If I drink this stuff next day I'll be a frog."
- Then he led me to a high-backed chair as he meticulously began to unfold his scenario with an evil patience. I was given a giant leather-bound book jammed with newspaper clippings. . . . thus the reason for the witch's invitation.
- With eagerness he pointed to each article with pride. He said, "I healed this woman through a Babylonian chant; See this man, I cured him while performing Druid worship; I was paid to curse this man with AIDS by his aunt."
- On and on, page after page, delightfully he flaunted each incident for an hour without a breath. He said, "Do you realize through my understanding of the dark regions that I can make you rich or even curse someone to death?" I sat literally intimidated by the immensity in demon power.
- While his face shone with a satanic arrogant bliss, he placed his hands on the arms of my chair and leaning into my face asked, "What can your God do to compete with this?"
- I knew then how Moses must have felt when his rod turned into a serpent and the three Egyptian magicians did the same. It's as if you're sitting there in that stunned moment while your faith gets violated and all you feel is weak, powerless, and lame. I desperately and deeply prayed, "Jesus give me wisdom, I don't want to put You through some foolish test."
- Then a shaft of light shot through my soul igniting my eyes with fire. God stood me up and I threw the book back in his chest.
- I said, "Isaac, I'll not compare God's kingdom and Satan's lair. The real comparison is the condition of your soul and the condition of mine. You are a puppet of the devil and one of these days they're coming for you-the soft associates of your incantations-The friendly demons you think you now control. The time will come when you'll be lying in bed, wheezing like a dying animal and those spirits will lay claim to the rights they own to your soul."
- "Then the room will grow dark, and the most hideous evil faces will come flaming out of the floor with a yell! The vile informants that promised reincarnation will claw your spirit and victoriously drag your soul to hell."
- Then I grabbed the book and said, "In that moment which mantra, which incantation you gonna chant to tell them to leave you alone? My friend, I know beyond the shadow of a doubt what I would say. I'm bought with the blood of Jesus! Let me go!"
- I said, "Isaac, when you tossed that book on my lap, you gloated with a sinister victory. You rejoiced when you saw your name written in black and white. Now I rejoice but not that your counsel of demons are subject to Jesus, But that my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life!" Then Isaac, jumped up and from his chair screamed, "You must leave. . . .NOW!!!"
- I said, "I will. . . . but one last obligation. . . . Next time think twice before you rumble with a man of God!" And by the way. Thanks for the witch's invitation.

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