

Warfare!

Allies and Enemies

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Given 07-Dec-96; Sermon #267

December 7th is an interesting day to be giving a sermon on. I have a good friend of mine who made a comment. He had asked his granddaughters if they knew what December 7th was. And they replied, “No, we don’t.” I asked somebody else, and they said, “Well, it’s two days after December 5th.” It is amazing how these things have been forgotten.

On December 7, 1941, I was 11 years of age, and I can remember the day. I was coming home from San Francisco and as we got to Oakland, which was where my home was, I looked out the car window at the newspaper rack on the corner. And I saw the big headlines that said, “WAR! Japan attacks Pearl Harbor!”

For a little history on that day: Indeed, Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor with a wave of 183 planes, and they had flown some 200 miles from their aircraft carriers to the fleet at Pearl. Most of the anti-aircraft guns happened to be unmanned, because our personnel were on leave in Pearl.

And even though we had radar, though it was brand new, the techs spotted the flight coming in, but they thought it was B17s coming from the West Coast.

The second wave of a 168 aircraft came in and descended on Pearl about an hour after the first attack to inflict maximum damage. And when the smoke cleared, and the assessment was made, the battleships Arizona and Oklahoma would never ever go back to sea again. But, the battleships Nevada, California, and West Virginia could be repaired, and were soon back in action.

There were many other ships destroyed. There were 347 aircraft destroyed and 2,300 American military people killed, including the 1,177 that were entombed in the Arizona. And 1,100 were also wounded.

It was on December 8, 1941, that President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced to Congress and the American people, telling them that December 7 would live on in infamy. Congress declared war, and that date has not been forgotten by those of us who were around at that time.

Some who have studied that war in the Pacific have truly felt that the hand of God was with America even in this dark hour. For some reason the Japanese failed to destroy the oil storage tanks and the shipyards. Probably the biggest blessing of all was that we did not have any aircraft carriers in Pearl Harbor on that morning.

And because of this, six months later, the U.S. Pacific Fleet was able to deliver a devastating blow to the Japanese Navy in the Battle of Midway. The Japanese with their superior navy lost the battle to timidity, confusion, and the mistakes they made, and to American naval tactics that produced much better than expected results. In this sea battle that we could have easily lost, a stunning victory was produced.

So, now our country was at war with Japan and Germany. And at age 11, turning twelve in January 1942, I had no idea what it meant to be at war, and what it would mean to our nation, our city, to our block, and to my house and home.

We, as a nation, were involved with what has been termed, “total war.” There was a Prussian general named Carl von Clausewitz. I first heard of him in the business world because people used his book to decide on tactics for business. But he was a famous military leader. He wrote a book entitled, *On War*, a reference work used by many. Von Clausewitz describes total war as, “a war in which the enemy’s citizens, territory, and property are attacked. The entire nation is involved in one way or another in the winning of the war.” This describes America during WWII.

We, on the West Coast, taped up our windows in case of bomb blasts so that the glass would not come flying in.

Every block, as I recall, had air-raid wardens; blackout drills to see if any light would leak out the windows at night. To save food, we all had “victory

gardens.” Even apartment dwellers had vacant lots allocated to them to plant and grow vegetables. Gasoline rationing came, and every citizen had a ration book. Many people did not drive the brand-new cars, because they did not get as good mileage as the older Model A’s did.

We had ration books for meat and sugar. We saved all our fat and took it back to the butchers to sell for 6 cents per pound so it could be used in the manufacture of munitions. I remember that there was very little butter so we used to mix margarine. We would get these big white blocks of margarine, and a little tiny color packet. It became my job to mix the margarine. And my hands smelled and were slippery for several days. That was something that I truly hated.

There were scrap metal drives and old tire drives because the enemy had control of our source of rubber (Indonesia). Vacant lots all over the city were piled high with all types of scraps. Of course, nobody would touch anything there, because it would have been unpatriotic to do so.

In school, they taught the identification of enemy aircraft. We had little blackout silhouettes that you would punch out and hang up with threads from the ceiling. Any schoolboy could identify whatever the Japanese and Germans might send over.

This is how our country was at this time.

So, I am an 11-year-old boy living in a nation that was totally mobilized to fight in any way on any front in the war that was confronting it.

We had wives who went to work in shipyards and people who travelled from all over the country to work in the war effort round the clock. It was really something special.

I can remember something that you will probably recall too, was the words of Winston Churchill, “All I can give you is blood, toil, sweat, and tears.” He was telling his nation that it would take all they had to win the conflict that was in front of them.

Now I thought that speaking on December 7th would be a time to give a message that would be good to remind us that collectively and individually, you and I are in a total war—all out total war. Even though our nation is relatively in peace, and even though we may feel secure, we who are striving for the Kingdom of God are in a warfare that in truth requires that we mobilize all we have to win the conflict that faces us.

The apostle Paul likened the Christian calling to overcoming and standing fast as a soldier in warfare. Turn to I Timothy 1, verses 18-19. Even though this applies to the ministry in a good part, it is something that applies to all of us.

I Timothy 1:18-19 This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck.

Barnes' Notes had a comment I felt would be profitable to read here.

The Christian life is often compared to a warfare or struggle for victory.

Concerning the ministry, Barnes writes:

A Christian minister is likened to a soldier, meaning that he should contend with earnestness as a Christian and a minister in the holy service in which he is engaged, and endeavor to secure victory. He wars a good warfare who is engaged in a righteous cause; who is faithful to his Commander and to his post; who is un-slumbering in observing the motions of the enemy, and fearless in courage in meeting them; who never forsakes his standard, and who continues thus faithful till the period of his enlistment has expired, or till death.

Concerning holding the faith and a good conscience, he writes:

Having faithfulness to the cause to which you have been enlisted as a good soldier should do; he should be faithful not to betray his trust; he should adhere to the cause of the Master with unwavering faithfulness, belief, and truth; that he should know what is right, and follow it despite all pulls to the contrary.

That sets a pretty high standard before us!

I think all of us can attest to the struggle we have gone through. Have we all had sleepless nights for all that is been going on these last few years? Have not all of us lost battles in trying to overcome and felt the discouragement and defeat? Have not all us felt the great effort required to get up again and to get back into the fray? And have not all of us felt the steady pressure of trials in this life, in the fight to put off the old man and the fight to put on Jesus Christ? And have we not all longed for the fight to end quickly in victory?

You bet we have!

In Romans 8, though we will not turn there, the apostle Paul mentions that the entire creation groans, every creature groans; everything is in a state of pain and disorder. And we all see it. We see crime, perversion, hatred, wars, ethnic cleansing, pollution, environmental destruction, poverty, the threat of war, and danger continue hanging over all the earth; nothing is as we know it should be. And because of this we all groan as well.

And we who are called by God, groan in anguish for deliverance to ourselves, and groan in anguish for the world around us. We long for the adoption and the change that will come with that.

Now I think it is easy to see why the apostle Paul used the analogy of being in a battle, because that is what we are in. In WWII everybody knew who the enemy was. It was not a hard thing to discover. We as a nation faced two enemies—Japan in the Pacific Theatre and Germany and its allies in the European Theater. But in the church of God, in the calling we have been given, we face three enemies. We will discuss those for a few minutes. Just to remind you, I know you know this, but I think it is good to review it, and this is a good day for it.

In our war, we do not always recognize the first enemy. And the reason is that we live right in the midst of his territory. The first enemy is the world around us. We are warned by the apostle John that we live in enemy territory, and we have to be careful to avoid it and becoming ensnared by it. Turn to I John 2.

I John 2:15-16 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

Now, when John is telling us not to love the world, he is not saying not to appreciate the wonderful creation that God has given us. This is not the point he is making. We are to appreciate all the creation on the earth. It is through this creation that we see God!

What John is talking about is the society that man has put together apart from God. We are not to make this world—the way that man does things, the wrong pleasures that mankind seeks, and the direction of his life—our focus and direction. And John goes on to make it clear that if this world's lifestyle and thinking is our lifestyle and thinking, then we do not love God the Father. By implication, then, we love the god of this world. That is a pretty heavy statement.

Then he goes on to say, for all that is in the world, or to sum up this lifestyle that is wrong to follow, he says the first one is the lust of the flesh—the desires of the flesh. It is the desire to give in to and to pamper whatever fleshly appetites pull at our minds, everything from overindulgence in food, drink, sexual perversions, or whatever it might be. That is the first thing, the lust of the flesh.

The second he lists is the lust of the eyes. Whatever gratifies the sight, like the owning of a huge home, a big car, furnishings, etc.—again, setting things up as an idol before God. This is wrong.

The third one—pride—refers to an ostentatious boastful arrogant pride. It more properly refers to what promotes pride; an index of pride, such as

impressive degrees, great wealth, and extravagant homes—this individual wants the approbation or approval of his fellow man because of his material accomplishments and possessions. And he holds the feeling of approval of those of this world to be more important, and will live a lifestyle to have that approval, rather than change to the lifestyle that God wants.

He said these three things are the traps that this world sets out for us. John goes on to point out that if the focus of one's life is on the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life, that he should be warned that these things are not from God, that these things are going to pass away, that they will not be in the Kingdom of God if we focus on these things. If we live this way, we will not be there. But he says those who fight to resist these pulls and do the will of God, will abide forever.

So, these three general areas are the snares that have been set to trap us in the world we live in.

Turn over to Matthew 16. This is a neat scripture because it just makes it very simple. What would you trade for the Kingdom of God?

Matthew 16:26 “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

I could not help but think of Howard Hughes whenever I see this verse. We went over to Long Beach to visit the Spruce Goose, a six-engine seaplane that Howard Hughes built to carry troops in WWII. As I recall (I may not be totally right), but I think a 747 would fit under one wing! When you walk through the door of the exhibit, and you see this thing, it is just staggering. But more staggering than that is his life story that was posted near the edge of the exhibit.

This man inherited a small machine shop, and he became a multi-millionaire. He set world speed records, he had tickertape parades, he had Hollywood starlets at his beck and call. Howard Hughes had everything that you could want. But he died an old man, deathly afraid of disease in a sanitary room not seeing anyone.

The point is that to gain the whole world means to possess it as your own, and have all its honors and pleasures, but what good is it going to be to you? It is going to pass away.

I know that for young people this is hard to see. The present looks so wonderful. Do not be fooled. It is just temporary.

Turn to I Corinthians 3.

I Corinthians 3:18-20 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness"; and again, "The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

This world does not have real wisdom. In other words, Paul is saying, let no man be puffed up with the vanity of this world; do not allow yourself to be fooled by what the world offers; what the world offers has caused all the problems that mankind faces. Do not be deceived and lean on this world's understanding in ways of doing things. If any man has approval of the world, and is esteemed as a man of wisdom, and prides himself on it, then let him be willing to be regarded as a fool by learning what God says, because the world would laugh at that. The world laughs at you and it laughs at me, because we do the things of God.

Paul continues saying this world's wisdom, philosophies, and way of living will not make one truly wise. Certainly, this is what Herbert W. Armstrong said over and over again, that this world's wisdom is not going to do a thing for you. Having a reputation for this world's wisdom will contribute nothing to true wisdom, and in fact it may get in your way, because you want to hang on to that reputation. It requires humbling ourselves to learn from God. We have to put down the world's wisdom, becoming like a child to be taught by God. And God looks upon the hearts of the wise of this world and He says they lack real wisdom, and what they plan will not come to pass.

Turn to Jeremiah 9 to see God's intent, and desires.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

This is what we are to glory in. This is who we are to look for wisdom. I am not saying that the physical things of this world are wrong to learn, but it is the way that the world does things that we have to be very careful about.

The second great enemy we face is Satan the Devil. Satan hates you and me with utter hatred. We are a direct threat to Satan's continued rule on this earth. He hates us because we are going to become members of the God Family—something that he cannot accomplish. We will be in the Kingdom of God, and he hates it. We can see why. Satan had it all together.

In Ezekiel 28 we read that Satan was a covering cherub, that he was ornamented with precious stones of all kinds, he could walk on the stones, he was perfect in his ways until pride and sin was found in him. Hillel lost it all. One commentary said that Satan is the sum of all moral impurities. This is how far he has fallen. He had it all. He was at God's throne. He gave it up for self-centeredness, hatred, and sin. He looks at you and me, and sees that God called us in our state of imperfectness, with all manner of problems.

God did not call us when we were young and relatively sin free. Rather, He waited until we had lived under Satan's rule long enough to learn Satan's way of life and making many mistakes. Satan must be furious at what God is doing. He is taking imperfect and sin-laden people with the intent of making them perfect, a state that Satan will never be able to achieve himself. Is it any wonder we are hated by him?

We know that Satan is a liar, and in Revelation 12:9, he is the great deceiver. He has deceived this world that it is not right—that right character, love toward fellow man, self-control, self-sacrifice, loyalty, fidelity, and love toward God are not important. And also, he has convinced them that pleasing the self in every way is right in whatever that might entail.

At the conclusion of the “Lord’s Prayer,” we know that Jesus Christ tells us, “Deliver us from evil,” or also, the snares and traps of the evil one. This is instruction from Jesus Christ Himself.

Now, during WWII the Japanese and the Germans had a secret weapon. They employed a tactic to destroy the morale of the American soldiers. They had two women—Tokyo Rose, in Japan; and Axis Sally. I believe these were both American women. These women had warm, husky voices, and would broadcast nightly to the soldiers on the front telling them what it would be like to be back home with their families, enjoying the love and companionship that was there.

If after we had lost a battle, they could get the list of casualties, and take the dog-tags off the dead soldiers, they would say how sorry they were that we had lost so many fine young men. And they would read off the names of those who were lost and express the sorrow that their loved ones would never see them again. They always stressed that if we would give up and surrender, that the Japanese or Germans would treat us with great respect; that by our surrendering, it would shorten the war, and we would be home with our loved ones once again.

They would play popular American music between their comments, to make the men homesick. They did all they could to make the American soldier question the fight that he was in. If they could get him to question just a little bit, it would start to shatter his resolve, damaging his effectiveness. It could cause him to chuck the whole thing and go back to peace and quiet.

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong used to mention Ephesians 2:2:

Ephesians 2:2 In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.

Satan does exactly the same thing (what Tokyo Rose and others did): He broadcasts dissatisfaction, self-centeredness, and self-justification; encouraging us to return to our old ways, to cause us to think that the fight is not worth it.

A quote from the *Mystery of the Ages* pg. 119, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong says,

Satan rules the human spirit within people to move them in attitudes of envy, jealousy, resentment, impatience, anger, bitterness, and strife. People have no realization of the tremendous power of Satan. The human spirit within each person is automatically tuned to Satan's wavelength. It seems as if Satan has surcharged the air over the entire earth with its attitude of self-centeredness and vanity.

Continuing on page 71, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong says about Satan:

Think how long it must have taken the soured and embittered Hillel to turn millions of holy angels into resentment, bitterness, disloyalty, and finally open and vicious rebellion!

As you can see, we cannot make any mistake about this. Satan's war is with those who are called now. There is no doubt about it. And it is we, who have lived under Satan's rule, who must fight; we must fight to come out from under his rule.

Carl von Clausewitz stated that, "War is an extension of a country's politics; it is a reflection of the leadership and direction it wishes to go."

Since Adam and Eve what direction and leadership style does this world reflect? Racial hatred? Ethnic cleansing? Sin? Darkness? Self-centeredness? Envy? Jealousy? Hatred? Bitterness? Perversion of lifestyle? Abuses of every sort? You bet it does! It reflects the mind of Satan the Devil.

Turn to Ephesians 6.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Quoting Albert Barnes:

We wrestle: The Greek word denotes wresting; a struggle; a fight; a combat which the Christian has to maintain, but not with flesh and blood men. The apostle does not mean to say that Christians had no enemies among men that oppose them, for they were exposed often to fiery persecution.

Not that they had nothing to contend with in the carnal and corrupt propensities of their own nature which was true then, as it is now, but that their main controversy was with the invisible spirits of wickedness that sought to destroy them. They [the evil spirits] were the source and the origin of all their spiritual conflicts. And with them, the warfare was to be maintained.

And he [the Christian] goes against the rulers of darkness of this world, the rulers that preside over the regions of ignorance and sin with which the earth abounds; darkness is an emblem of ignorance, misery, and sin. No description could be more accurate in describing these malignant spirits as ruling over a dark world. The earth, dark and wretched, ignorant and sinful is just such a dominion as they would choose or cause, and the degradation and woe of the heathen world are just as foul as such spirits would delight in.

It is a wide and powerful empire, consolidated by ages, sustained by authority of law by the omnipotence of perverted religious principle by all the reverence for antiquity by all the powers of selfish corrupt and base passions. No empire has been so extended or has continued for so long as the empire of darkness. And nothing on this earth is so difficult to destroy.

And yet the apostle says that it is on that kingdom that we are to make war.

There is no question that the second enemy with all its snares and lies is Satan. We must overcome. So, that is the world, and Satan.

Now, the third enemy we must face is insidious and dangerous. He lives in our house. He sleeps in our bed. He wears our clothes. And his nature is described in Jeremiah 17:9, the heart is desperately and incurably wicked. Who can know it?

John Ritenbaugh mentioned the other day that Pogo, from the comic strip, made the comment, "I have met the enemy, and the enemy is us." So, we must overcome what we are with a nature influenced by Satan the Devil.

Back in Romans 8:7 we read that we were totally opposed to God. Our carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. That is how we were before we were called. Turn back to Ephesians 2 again.

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

This is how you and I were. Hopefully we are coming out of that. Paul is saying that we were dead in our sins. We did not have a chance. We were not being called at that point and were living under the rulership of Satan. And just as a dead man cannot see or hear what is going on, we could not begin to see or understand what God was doing.

We walked in the course of this world. It was a normal way to live. We did not know better. And thus we walked in transgression of God's law, according to the prince of the power of the air. Prince is "*Archon*, the one first in authority and power; the one who has preeminence to rule." This is Satan. Make no mistake; he is in charge of this world. So, we walked according to him, and Paul goes on to say, the same spirit works in the children of disobedience.

Then Paul said in verse 3, and then we, and he includes himself <garbled skipping> because of our habits and sins, we were subject to the wrath of God.

I think it is fair to tell you that whatever worked in us before we were called, excesses in drinking, eating, gossip, fighting, sexual lusts, being angry, lazy, bigotry, and so forth, are still with us in our human nature—wanting to come out.

I have used this example before: Human nature is like the coil spring. Just so long as you have your weight fully standing upon it, it stays down. But you relax and it wants to come up.

Turn to Romans 6. God tells us we have a real war in this area.

Romans 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

This is the choice! This is the war we are in. Are we going to obey the person we were? Or are we going to obey God and become what God wants us to be? Turn to Romans 8.

Romans 8:8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

There is the decision for us. We must war against our flesh. This is the third enemy we have to fight.

Here we have seen the three enemies that we must combat. Satan is fully invested in all three. He is the one who has been given to rule the world we must live in. We do not have a choice in this. He and his demon cohorts have

a perfect hatred for us because of the future that is in front of us. He hates us specifically for the calling that we have been given. He will do all he can to snare us, to trap us into sinning.

Of course, Satan has been involved in our past. And he who now is called the accuser of the brethren knows our weaknesses because of his influence over our self prior to our calling. He had a profound effect upon us. We still fight this today.

When we look at the odds stacked against us, we look at all that we have to fight, it seems that the battle cannot be won. There is no way, no chance of a snowball in you-know-where. It appears Satan has all the weapons—everything going for him. But I assure you that this is not the case. This is a war that we *must* win. Satan is not going to win it.

What we have going for us is that we have the intent and the power of God to save us that will not be thwarted by Satan's desire to destroy us. Please turn back to Ephesians 2 once again and we will just get a little glimpse of this here. Remember we were dead in our sins. So he says:

Ephesians 2:4-7 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

This is the intent of God. But you know, when the fight seems so difficult, and we feel that we are not going to make it, or we feel that God is not in here with us to help us, we can look on God's past performances and get much encouragement, knowing He had complete power to deliver us from whatever problems we may run into. Please turn back to Deuteronomy 4. This is pretty exciting stuff:

Deuteronomy 4:32-39 "For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether any

great thing like this has happened, or anything like it has been heard. Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live? Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God; there is none other besides Him.

Out of heaven He let you hear His voice that He might instruct you; on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire. And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power, driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land as an inheritance, as it is this day. Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

This is He who has called us, brethren.

I want to share some more scriptures that show the power of God:

Psalm 66:1-4 Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth! Sing out the honor of His name. Make His praise glorious. Say to God, "How awesome are Your works! Through the greatness of Your power Your enemies shall submit themselves to You. All the earth shall worship You and sing praises to You. They shall sing praises to Your name." Selah

Think about that! Think of the tremendous power that God has to bring the entire earth into subjection unto Him, and to bring all enemies under His control. God is on your side, brethren.

Psalm 68:35-36 O God, You are more awesome than Your holy places. The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people. Blessed be God!

To paraphrase this a bit, he says, “God, you are awesome when you come from Your place of habitation to help Your people. Your awesomeness fills the mind; You give strength and power to Your people.” God is not weak, He is not feeble, He is able to protect them. He shows that He can gird them with strength, He can defend them, and He can sustain them in the trials they face.

Acknowledge God! He is not a God whose strengths fail, or who is feeble or powerless when His aide is needed. He is fully able to see to all the wants and needs that we might have. Our trust and faith in Him is proper because He can deliver us whatever may come. Blessed be God for all that He is, all that He has done, and for all that He will do.

Isaiah 40:28-31 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

<garbling, skipping along, quoting someone paraphrasing above scriptures>

. . . have not you heard from all your past teachings that the Everlasting God has existed from eternity. He was unchangeable in His purpose. And He is the Creator of the earth. He does not faint or become tired. He is completely able to defend His people. He gives power to His weak and feeble people—

this is how He is! And because of this, you should put your faith and trust in Him. He said that God is fully conscious of your frailty, and of your trials, and of our need for support.

Then he says, “For young men, their strength shall faint.” He says that these young men were chosen for tasks or jobs that required tremendous strength, and they were in superb physical condition. But he said, “Even these men, their strength will fail.” “But those who wait upon God, expecting His help and assistance, are going to have their strength renewed, and they will ascend,” and he uses the example of the powerful wings of an eagle to raise them up, and they will have the strength and vigor of a righteous purpose, and be sustained in whatever trials they must face.

You see, even though Satan and this world, and our human nature seem to have it all, God the Father and Jesus Christ have all the power to save us and put us on our feet.

For our last scripture (in this section), turn to Nahum 1.

Nahum 1:2-6 God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; the LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies; the LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither, and the flower of Lebanon wilts. The mountains quake before Him, the hills melt, and the earth heaves at His presence; yes, the world and all who dwell in it. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.

What he is saying here is that God controls the weather; He controls it all. He has all this power that is able to be used for you for your defense.

Nahum 1:7 The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.

You see, brethren, God's intent is to save His people, and the entire world. And He will employ all of His power to accomplish this.

In Matthew 28 Jesus Christ was telling the apostles, "I have been given all power. As a result of this, you are to go into all the world and do this and that."

We have seen the power that was given to Him; we have seen what He did with that power. Demons were cast out, the sick, lame, deaf, and blind were healed, the dead were raised to life. You see? This is the power that is available to us to win the fight. Further, God's intent and purpose will be fulfilled, and it will come to pass.

Well, we have a fight. What is our position in this fight? I am sure that we all know that we are not to sit down and do nothing, saying that Jesus Christ will take care of it all. We have a great deal of our own effort to put forth. Winston Churchill said, "All I have to give you is blood, sweat, tears, and toil." The same thing applies to us.

Please turn over to II Corinthians 10. Our fight is rather unique and interesting. It is a lot different than the fight of the world. We do war in a different way.

II Corinthians 10:3-4 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.

Paul states here that we have weapons. But these are not the sort that Satan would use, and they are not the sort that mankind would use. The weapons of mankind are machine guns, atomic bombs, fighters, submarines, torpedoes, and things of this nature; poison gas too, to win their war and fight.

And the weapons of Satan are those that we would view today as being lying, backbiting, gossiping, stealing, intimidating, harassing, cheating, and threatening; this is the type of thing that Satan does.

But the weapons of God are just the opposite of these. Look in verse 5:

II Corinthians 10:5 Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

In other words, we are to learn something new here! Our weapons are to cast down false arguments, lies, and other things that are against God. And our weapons are to bring us—our minds and our thinking—to the obedience of Christ. You see, God’s weapons are designed to produce a change in you and me that this world cannot understand and knows nothing about. God’s weapons are the very teachings of God and are designed to make us into a new creation.

Let us turn over to Ephesians 6 and see what the armor of God entails because God’s weapons are to make us into a new creation:

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

What this phrase means is to wrap yourself completely in the armor of God. It means to hide in it and clothe yourself with it. It means to completely immerse yourself in the armor of God.

Ephesians 6:13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

This “take up” means assume the whole armor of God with the intent that when the battle is fiercest, you will be able to stand in complete victory. The key, here, is to take these things on, but they are not just to take and to hold. These things require action in every one of these things. And again, we are not just to stand and hold our own, but we are to stand with the solid intent of being victorious in winning the battle.

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Now we are to live by every word of truth, and not being fooled by Satan's broadcast, which we heard about earlier. But we are to set our mind to rein in our desires based on that truth, and to fight the pressures of the world, doing all we can to live in perfect righteousness. This is exactly what we should be doing. We are to become wrapped in righteousness, integrity, holiness, and purity of life. These are the weapons that God wants us to have.

Being that we are concerned with war and peace, today, let us move on to verse 15:

Ephesians 6:15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

I used to read over that, and I understood what it said, in part. The Roman soldier had hobnailed shoes to give him a better foundation, and good footing. But there is much more to this than that. The word "preparation" means base and foundation that you stand on. Have your feet protected so as to be sure-footed. This is the common explanation. And then there is the peace that the world does not have. We are to have peace. Satan and this world are filled with hatred and war, but we are to be those who will show the world the true way to peace.

What is the gospel or message of peace that we are to be shod with? Is this something that we are to run next door, and tell our neighbor about? No. It is the message of peace that we proclaim by the way that we live. The gospel of peace is the message of peace we proclaim by the way that we live.

Turn to Romans 12. This is the outline for the gospel of peace:

Romans 12:17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

What that simply means is that when you respond to someone who is evil, you should carefully consider your response, that it be honest and right, so that mankind may look back on it later, and say, "Yes, that was a right decision; he conducted himself wisely."

Romans 12:18-19 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Do not take vengeance upon yourself. That is a prerogative of God. He knows how much to give. He is teaching this person you are dealing with, and you do not know how much to give.

Romans 12:20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

Why? Because you are showing him an example of peace.

Romans 13:1-14 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love

your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

This is the gospel of peace, brethren. This is the attitude, the lifestyle, the way of living that we are to have, and the example that we are to set. This is what Paul talks about when he said, "Be shod with the gospel of peace." Please turn to Ephesians 6 again.

Ephesians 6:16 Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

I want to read *Barnes' Notes*, here, because he does it very well. Regarding the shield of faith:

The shield of faith, here, is made to occupy a more important place than either of the Christian graces. It bears to the whole Christian character in the same relation that the shield does to the other parts of the armor of the soldier. It protects all, and is indispensable to the security of all. As is with the case of the shield, it was an ingenious device by which bows and arrows might be parried off, and the whole body defended. It could be made to protect the head, or heart; or thrown behind to meet an attack there. As long as the soldier had his shield, he felt secure. And as long as a Christian has faith, he is safe. It comes to his aid in every attack that is made upon him no matter from what quarter. It is the defense and guardian of every other Christian grace, and secures the protection which the Christian needs in the whole of the spiritual war.

Going on,

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The helmet of salvation is the focus on the hope of salvation; the promise of victory. How can a soldier fight when he does not have the promise of victory?

The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is the offensive weapon we use, and Jesus Christ used in Matthew 4:4 against Satan. It is the truth of God that fights and wins against the lies and deceptions thrown by this world, and by Satan.

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

And to cap it all off, we are to be constantly in prayer that we and all our fellow soldiers may persevere and be victorious. We have to have all these things, brethren. We must do all these things that we might stand in that evil day. And that evil day can be your time when things are at their very worst.

Now, when I think of an example of a warrior, I think of the apostle Paul. Even though Paul had a great calling and a great commission by God, he still had to overcome everything we do—fear, lack of faith, discouragement, and the pulls of the flesh just as we do today. And he left us an example of a disciplined mind that when followed will help us to be victorious as well.

I Corinthians 9:24-27 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

<garbled, skipping>

1. He knew he was in the race of his life. This was no casual thing to the apostle Paul. He understood that with God's calling that this was his only chance. He could not come back and do it later. He knew he had to win the race or be lost forever.

2. Paul also knew that he had to maintain a strict training regimen. This race was not running laps or picking up barbells. It was prayer, study, meditation, fasting, loving others, serving others, and obedience. It was drill, drill, drill, in God's way of life until it became part of him. That is God's intent.

3. Paul planned his race. He looked where God wanted him to go, where He wanted his life to go, and he planned every step he was to take, as much as he could. He did not fight in the air like shadow boxing. He just did not let his life happen to him. He planned to overcome, and he planned to live his life as God wanted him to.

Paul did not run his race in ignorance as to what the goal was, or what the means of obtaining it was. It was no mystery to him. He knew the goal was eternal life in the Kingdom of God, and he knew the method of getting there. Paul also knew that he had spectators who were watching him to see if he would fail. The church was watching him to see which way to run. And the thing that motivated Paul the most was he knew that God was watching him above all the rest, and he was motivated to run.

4. Paul took control of his mind and body with all of its desires, weaknesses, bad attitudes, tempers, self-justifications, and wrong thoughts. He did not allow that mind to control him. He said he kept under his body—protect my body like a prize fighter in a ring with his guard up. I protect my mind from the blows aimed at it. Paul knew that the three enemies that we all face—Satan, self, and this society—would all hurl temptations at him to make him slip; that he must control his mind with its appetites, or be spiritually crippled, and possibly lose the race. You see, we have to have the same mindset as well. We must plan and control each step.

So now, where is our battlefield? I think you know this one too.

In about 4^{BC}, there was a Chinese general named Sunsu. He set forth 13 principles for generalship. Much later, Napoleon set forth 115 maxims to guide his generals. But in the U.S. war, General Nathan Bradford Forrest needed just one maxim: Get to the goal with the most men. He agreed with Carl von Clausewitz who saw the defeat of the enemy's armed forces on the battlefield is the heart of strategy. To destroy the enemy means you have won the war. It is finished.

As this applies to us, we are not to sit, we are not to be retreating from the fight, we are not to be on the sideline making excuses why the fight cannot be won. We are to jump into the fight with everything we have, to do battle with the aid of God to overcome our enemies.

Where is our battlefield? It is in our home, at our jobs, in our relationships with our wives and children, with our superiors at work, <garbled> neighbors across the fence; it is anywhere we are, in whatever we are doing. We must reflect in everything we do the teachings of God.

What is our purpose? Our goal? And our objective?

There may be many objectives in war, such as the extension of political concepts, the consolidation of power, the acquiring of land, the solving of economic problems, but the overall purpose is to defeat the enemy.

Since Cain slew Abel, it seems that man has chosen war to solve his problems. It has been said that there have been only about 200 years of the 6,000 years since the creation of man where there was peace. And today we can see war or the attitude of war on every side, in every place—Africa, Bosnia, the Arab's hatred of the Jews, the gangs that fight in our city streets. It is man's inability to find peace, frankly, fulfills prophecy.

Turn over to Romans 3. (This is one of the proofs of the Bible.)

Romans 3:10-18 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat

is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Mankind put together after WWI the League of Nations. And because of that body's harsh treatment of Germany, it caused great trial and trouble causing them to rise up again causing WWII. And now we have the United Nations; it will not work either. The cost of war in human lives and suffering is astounding. In the Civil War with brother against brother it has been estimated (nobody has a real count) that a 1,300,000 Americans were killed. 600,000 Northern lives and about 700,000 Southern lives. It has been said that there have been more lives killed in the Civil War than in both WWI, and WWII combined. It was just a bloodbath.

In the war to end all wars, WWI, 9,000,000 men were killed: one in every 8. Not to mention the civilians killed on the sidelines. In WWII, according to official figures, approximately 31,000,000 were killed. It would stagger the mind to consider how many people have been killed or died in war or caused by warfare since the creation. We have no idea what the number would be. But you can begin to see what war does. All because the mind of man cannot conceive of the way that would produce peace, this is why we have war. The mind of man cannot begin to understand that.

What will the numbers be in the next war? You remember what it says in Matthew 24:22, "Except those days should be shortened, there should be no flesh saved alive. But for the elect's sake, those days will be shortened."

As the chosen of God, what is our objective? It is to fight the true war to end all war. It is to fight to change our human nature, the nature of this world under Satan to the very nature of God. It is the changing of the self, the building of righteous character that will cause war to cease.

There is one verse that sums up the whole thing. This is exactly what our war is! This is our job!

Romans 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

It sounds too simple, but it is so difficult. But that is what our war is.

Today, December 7th, 1996, we remember the attack that brought us into a terrible war that cost so much, devastated so many futures, and left so many bitter, prejudiced, and hate-filled minds, and so many more sorrowing after their lost loved ones.

But the time is coming when this date will no longer be remembered. Nor will the dates of any other wars be remembered. The time is coming when mankind will no longer learn war anymore.

Turn to Isaiah 2:2

Isaiah 2:2-4 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Now this world does not understand that, brethren. And the day is coming when this world will no longer learn war. It will rather learn how to achieve peace.

But for us, that time is right now. Do not shrink from the fight. Do not hold back, because so much is riding on our conversion. Let us all join in to this battle to overcome, and all fight the good fight.

