

Fighting the Good Fight

Not a single one of us who is accountable to God is a bystander in the war for the soul. Daily, each of us is on the battlefield. Granted, some have fallen and some are sorely wounded, but then again, some, though wounded, fight on while others stand strong and firm, clad in the breastplate of faith and love and crowned with the hope of salvation (I Thessalonians 5:8). This battle must be won for eternity itself holds the fruits of victory or the sorrows of defeat. Thanks be unto God that His Divinely inspired Word gives us direction as to how we can deal with the temptations that Satan fires at us in his attempt to defeat us. Here are but a few thoughts regarding how to overcome temptation.

To begin, be sure that you are in Christ. According to the apostle Paul, all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Ultimate spiritual victory can be found only in Christ (I Corinthians 15:57). Peter said of Jesus, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). Paul exhorted, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves..." (II Corinthians 13:5). To get into Christ, one must obey His Gospel by believing that Jesus is Christ (John 8:24), repenting of sins (Luke 13:3), confessing faith in Jesus as Christ (Romans 10:9-10) and being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Those who have not obeyed the Gospel are not in Christ. They are outside of Christ. Victory is in Christ and in Christ alone. "Now thanks be to unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ..." (II Corinthians 4:4).

Once in Christ, be sure that you remain faithful, living according to God's Word. Satan cannot stand in the presence of the Word of God (Matthew 4:10-11). Christians are to, "as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (I Peter 2:2). It's sad to say but some, having obeyed the Gospel, allow temptations and the cares, riches and pleasures of this life to root that Word out of their hearts (Luke 8:13-14). Once we stop seeking greater knowledge of God through His written Word, we stop growing and we become easy targets for Satan. On the other hand, with study comes faith (Romans 10:17) and the maturity to more capably handle Satan's attacks (Hebrews 5:14).

As a growing Christian, keep your focus on heaven. Keep your eyes on the prize, as it were. "... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of the faith..." (Hebrews 12:1-2). Satan has many powerful weapons in his arsenal that are designed to lure our hearts and minds away from eternity. He would have us dwell on the here and now, on earthly reward rather than heavenly gain. He would have us fall for that which appeals to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." John says that these things are not of the Father, but of the world, "and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (I John 2:16-17). Daily we are surrounded by distractions, both externally and internally. Externally, there are temptations both daring and subtle to deceive us. Internally, worries, doubts and fears fight for a foothold in our hearts, each one capable of taking our minds off of heaven if we give our permission. That desire for heaven must burn hot within our breasts if we are to thwart these Satanic attacks. We must have the determination of David who wrote, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm 119:11).

By Divine inspiration, Paul penned lines worthy of his own epitaph when near the end of his life he wrote, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day..." (II Timothy 4:7-8). Paul's exhortation to each Christian to fight this battle with God on our side is clearly seen at the close of II Timothy 4:8 in the words, "and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

The crown of righteousness awaits. Fight on, dear Christian soldier. Fight on!