## The Good Fight of Faith Is Good (3)

by Harry Osborne

Another qualifying statement about the fight required of us has to do with its goodness of character. The injunction to engage in the fight of faith is inherently tied to goodness. Why? The fight is first good by design because God authorized it as already seen. Its inherent goodness comes from the good doctrine of Christ (1 Tim. 4:6). Our fight is also good because it focuses on the cause of good and right, not upon self or selfish desires. When one denies self in the battle between flesh and Spirit, part of the consequent fruit of the Spirit is goodness (Gal. 5:16-24; Eph. 5:7-10).

One fighting the good fight of faith will not use carnal tactics because he is filled with the goodness found in the truth and shows it in his character. The forces of Satan will falsely accuse him of evil, but objective evaluation will show the soldier of Christ has exhibited "good works" (1 Pet. 2:11-12).

We live in an age where some in halls of academia and elsewhere blur the distinction between the evil of terrorists and honorable soldiers who upholding principles of right. They see the use of force on the part of soldier and terrorist as analogous. They fail to distinguish between honorable soldiers fighting to restore lawful order and terrorists who fight to overthrow lawful order and impose their own will. Their failure to distinguish between the two stems from a lack of discernment between good and evil. Those who cannot understand the differences between honorable soldiers and terrorists say more to discredit their own lack of wisdom than to discredit the lawful use of force. Sadly, we have brethren who cannot see the difference between fighting the good fight of faith and "spiritual terrorism." When one sees all fighting for truth as "bad," "evil" or "terrorism," his view clearly differs from God's.

After being certain of the necessity and character of the fight, the divine mandate to "fight the good fight of faith" still remains our obligation. Accusing others of bad attitudes when they engage in the fight does not excuse us from an obligation to join the fight with a proper attitude. Charging others of a desire to "make a name for themselves" does not excuse us from the obligation to do battle with worthy motives. If one does not like the way others are handling the sword of the Spirit, let him pick it up and show how to wield it correctly. If one merely objects to the way others do it, while refusing to soil his own hands in the fight, he should not be surprised when he is not taken seriously. Some folks have never met an enemy of truth they could not appease. Jesus and the apostles never met an enemy of truth they could not defeat with Scripture.

As we prepare for the warfare commanded, let us always remember that we have been given all of the equipment necessary for battle.

“*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. 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. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”* (Eph. 6:10-17).

Soldiers in battle array are not stationed far from the fray. They are on the frontlines of the war. So it is in the army of God. Our armor is given for use in the spiritual battles surrounding us daily. It is strong enough to meet the task and bring us the victory promised by Christ, even as the apostle said,

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds), casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; and being ready to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be made full (2 Cor. 10:3-6).

The fight against this mighty foe is not a fight of containment, but until **every** evil way and **every** evil thought is vanquished and obedience to Christ reigns triumphant. There is no armistice to be offered to sin and error. Only the unconditional surrender of the soul stained by sin and error is sufficient to cause the change of heart and action necessary for salvation. Yes, it takes courage to undertake such a fight. To that end, the apostle urged,

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing affrighted by the adversaries: which is for them an evident token of perdition, but of your salvation, and that from God; because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf: having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me (Phil. 1:27-30).

Throughout his life in defense of the gospel, we never found Paul cowering in the corner for fear of the adversaries of truth. His boldness was evident. His determination was resolute. His charge was ever forward -- never retreat. The confidence did not come from an innate bravado, but from an absolute confidence in the Lord who gave him the charge to fight and the certainty of the cause. Those at Philippi were exhorted to form a united front and follow his example in "striving for the faith of the gospel." Only in that way were they using the life God had given them in a way "worthy of the gospel of Christ." There has always been a priority and urgency to the battle against error and evil. Making it clear that he diverted his original intent in writing to meet the pressing demand to "contend earnestly for the faith," Jude said,

Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

The word translated "contend" is epagonidzomia, a compound of two Greek words. The prefix of the word (epi) serves to strengthen or intensify the root verb (agonidzomai). From the latter word, we get our word ***agony***. What is the point? We must put agonizing effort and sacrifice into the fight against the adversaries of truth. It requires, not just contending for the faith, but earnestly or strenuously contending for the truth revealed by God. Let us not plant the sword of the Spirit in the dust and replace it with a bouquet of daisies for truth’s enemies. Let us never be ashamed of the crimson banner of the cross or the truth ratified by the blood of our Savior. Let it never be lowered to raise in its place a white flag of surrender in compromise with carnality.

Let us remember who it is that opposes the truth -- they are enemies of the cross of Christ. When we begin to look with greater favor on those who teach error than on brethren teaching truth, albeit with a different approach, we have our priorities badly out of order. How can we fight the fight of faith while making a pact of cooperation with the enemies of the cross? Let us again set our goal upon "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

The examples of faithful saints of old, who suffered and died in terrible ways in service to the Lord, cry out for us to continue the fight and press on to the victory in Christ (Heb. 11:32 - 12:4). Let us summon in our hearts a compassion for the souls of men that compels us to needful conflict aimed at bringing freedom to spirits in jeopardy of eternal torment. Let us be lifted in spirit and stirred in mind to a call for spiritual battle that aims to defeat the tyranny of sin. There is something worse than a difficult and demanding fight – it is a dishonorable peace with unrighteousness and error. May the attitude of true soldiers animate us to arise for the battle with sin and evil. Let us be steeled with the heart of righteous warriors and strike!