

June 6

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R1859 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2006)

SOBRIETY, VIGILANCE, STEADFASTNESS

--1 Pet. 5:8,9--

WHAT more appropriate watchwords than these could express the proper attitude of the Christian soldier? --"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are endured by your brotherhood in the world."

The "brotherhood" includes all the soldiers of Christ throughout the world, and this symbol of their present character is not a mere empty sound; for there is a mighty conflict in progress, a war being waged, and the encounter is one of desperate earnestness. Those who know nothing of this great conflict, and who have no part in it, though they may bear the name of Christ--Christians--really have no right to that name; for they are not Christ's soldiers. Jesus himself was a soldier, and fought the battle through to the bitter end, and gained the victory. And he is the Captain of all those who accept the redemption he purchased and that follow in his footsteps, and he will lead them on to certain victory, if they faint not.--Gal. 6:9.

The Apostle Paul gives the same idea of the Christian life. He represents it as a desperate warfare, and urges all the true soldiers of Christ to "put on the whole armor of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for," says he, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places....Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness," etc.--Eph. 6:10-18.

When we consider how strongly our adversary is entrenched in the world--in its ideas, its maxims, its institutions, its policy, its hopes, aims and ambitions--and the Christian life as in direct opposition to all these; and when we further consider how, because we were once partakers of the spirit of the world, the enemy of our souls has strongly entrenched himself in our weak fallen natures; and still further, how, with shrewd subtlety, this invisible, intelligent personal foe is plotting and scheming to allure, deceive and lead us into sin--when with sober judgment we consider all these things, then indeed we realize that we are in the midst of a great conflict.

The three points of attack by the enemy are, as the Apostle John (1 John 2:16) enumerates them, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

The first of these includes all those appetites and passions common to the whole human family, which in their legitimate uses under the full control of reason and conscience, are right and proper, but which, unduly cultivated until they become the masters of reason and conscience, degrade and debase the man.

The second,--"the lust of the eyes,"--includes all those ambitions to acquire and possess whatsoever things the eye (the natural eye or the eye of the understanding) perceives to be good; i.e., to be gratifying to the carnal mind, the old unregenerate nature. This disposition impels to self-gratification regardless of the rights and liberties of others in any direction. It craves wealth, or fame, or power, or social distinction, and to these ends it inclines to harness every energy of mind and body.

The third,--"the pride of life,"--is the blossom of selfishness, so abhorrent to God and to all good men. It is that disposition in a man which glories in his shame. When the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes have brought their curse of narrowness, bigotry and conceit; and when they have gone further in depriving fellow-men of their rights and privileges, then pride, the exultation of meanness, has its short triumph, and loftily soars above the unfortunate subjects of its power and gloats over the desolation it has wrought.

These three points of attack by the great enemy are the points which the Lord would have us guard with unwearied vigilance. Be sober, be vigilant, and watch that the enemy gain no approach to the citadel of your heart by any one of these routes.

That he makes repeated attacks is certain; and that these attacks come suddenly and without warning, and often with terrible force, is a matter of experience with all: hence the necessity for sober and constant vigilance. Be assured the ever watchful enemy will take advantage of our unguarded moments and our unfortified conditions

if such there be. Even with all the watchfulness and readiness which we can command, the ability to withstand the enemy and to resist his attacks causes more or less suffering, and often taxes the powers of endurance to the utmost. Indeed, we must expect that the tension on our powers of endurance will sometimes be so great as to threaten disruption, and as to surely cause it if we trust to our own strength. We are forewarned to think not strange of the fiery trial that shall surely try us if we are indeed the sons of God and soldiers of Christ, as though some strange thing happened unto us. (1 Pet. 4:12-16.) These things should be expected and carefully prepared for by the Christian soldier.

Peter intimates that the power by which we are to resist the adversary is the power of faith--"whom resist, steadfast in the faith." And John expresses the same thought, saying, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4.) If we are not strong in the faith, how can we endure hardness for it? Faith must grasp the exceeding great and precious promises of God and appreciate their value. Faith must lay hold also upon the power of God and find the grace to help in every time of need. And faith in a personal righteous God, whose eye is ever upon us, must steadily cultivate those elements of character which are always pleasing and acceptable to him, and which Peter tells us are most essential to our final overcoming in this warfare.--2 Pet. 1:5-10.

He urges that, in addition to our faith in the exceeding great and precious promises which inspire zeal and give us renewed courage, we should give all diligence to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." Then he adds, "For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

The steady persistent cultivation of these graces of character will also clarify our spiritual vision, enabling us the more fully to comprehend the truth of God, and thus, "by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left," we shall be able to "withstand all the fiery darts of the adversary" and to win the victory of faith and make our calling and election sure.

With this view of the great battle of life to the Christian, ⁽¹⁾what a work we realize to be before us, and what necessity for sobriety, vigilance and steadfastness! It is a life work, a life battle against a mighty foe entrenched in our flesh. The powers without are strong indeed, but the civil war with the powers within is by far the most to be dreaded. If we become in any measure intoxicated with the spirit of the world;--if we give way to self-gratification, love of ease, pleasure, a little indulgence of any of the old dispositions of envy, malice, pride, vain-glory, vaunting of self, headiness, highmindedness, wrath, strife, or any such thing--even a little, Oh, how great is the peril to which we are exposed!

Beloved, let us war a good warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil, seeking and finding, daily and hourly, fresh supplies of grace; for every day and every hour is a time of need if we are but awake to realize it. It is to the warfare with the powers entrenched within that we are again referred, when it is said, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." (Prov. 16:32.) Yes, the task is a greater one, and represents a greater, as well as a nobler, effort. Let us fight the good fight of faith along this line. Let our lives be a daily and hourly struggle to overcome the evil that is in ourselves, to purify and beautify our own characters. Thus shall we be the more fully prepared to strive faithfully and steadily against the foes without --to war a good warfare to the end.

The Apostle, out of the fulness of his love and sympathy for all his comrades in the army of the Lord, adds to his earnest exhortation this parting benediction--"The God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." ⁽²⁾It is only through endurance of hardness as good soldiers of Christ that

⁽¹⁾ Jun. 6 Manna, Lu. 21:34

⁽²⁾ Jun. 7 Manna, 1 Pet. 5:10

this desirable condition can be attained--viz., perfect self-control and ability to resist evil, established faith, patience and virtue, settled, abiding rest in Christ, and hope through his word of promise. This

undoubtedly was the Apostle's own experience as he grew old in the Master's service, and so may it be ours. Let each departing year find us nearer the glorious summit of perfection!

LUKE 21:34

(Luk 21:34 KJV) "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life..."

R565 "The words of Jesus are very peculiar if we will notice them... "Take heed that your HEARTS be not *overcharged* with the cares of this life." Now, it is *possible* for a man to have a great deal of worldly care requiring his attention, and yet not have his heart much affected or influenced by it. He may have just all he can attend to, and yet his *heart* be quite free from the burden. Why? Because his heart is not in it as much as his *head*. If he is doing all *as unto the Lord*, there will not be much danger of his heart being overcharged. We need right here to "*take heed*" and not delude ourselves with the idea that our hearts are with the Lord, and that we are in full sympathy with him and his work, if we do not find, or make, or take time to commune with him and feast upon his word, and partake of his Spirit...

"O yes, we must be diligent in business so that we can provide for our own families, for he who provides not for his own house has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel. (1 Tim. 5:8)..."

In accord with our desire to be faithful, the adversary is crowding overmuch work upon us, all of which is claimed to be duty, though the demands are so numerous that we have insufficient time for the accomplishment of them all. This crowding upon us more than we can possibly do, is *evidently* the enemy, and is intended to keep us from the most important of all work, the study of God's word, through which we are enabled to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, and *by which we are thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work*. Are we not, in our over-burdened condition, forgetting to "seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness"? There is manifestly no work so important as to keep the love of God burning brightly upon the altar of our hearts, and no means so likely to accomplish this as the study of the word of God, and prayer. Of course we do not mean that these shall be done to the exclusion of good works, but we do mean that good *works* should not be allowed to exclude these...

Some who could not be induced nor pressed into worldliness, he will keep busy looking after the welfare of others, to the exclusion of their own growth in the knowledge of the truth...J. C. SUNDERLIN. *Fort Edward, N.Y.*"

R5318 "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, 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."

...St. Paul tells us how much he valued these earthly possessions—ambitions, honors, etc... They are but *loss and dross*. Therefore he threw them all away...

As we look back to the faithful witnesses of the past, we find that they carried very few weights along with them. They

cast their weights aside, and ran with patience the course before them.

Not all weights and hindrances are to be cast aside, however. A man who enters the race with a wife and children must not throw these aside. If he has a child on each shoulder, then he must *run with them*. But if one who is *unmarried* is thinking of engaging in this race, he will do well to consider carefully *how many children he should have on each shoulder, or whether he should have a wife on his shoulders*. Some would be hindered with a wife, while others might be hindered without a wife. Each must decide for himself what is best. We are not trying to lay down rules."

R4567 "It is right to economize and, as St. Paul expresses it, "to lay by in store" for our own future needs or that we may have to lend to others, in need. God's people are to be frugal, to avoid debts, to be "forehanded," and with some reserve of capital.

But earthly things are not to be the treasures of their souls, but merely their servants, conveniences--always ready for use, for every emergency, freely, wholeheartedly. He who follows this course will rarely have large earthly wealth... He who sets his affections upon the things above will become correspondingly heavenly, spiritual, blessed, generous."

R378 "To be an overcomer now, requires close application to the one thing in hand -- the conflict. Hence, it is necessary that our time and attention be kept as much as possible free from the thronging cares of life, which, if permitted, would swallow us up. It is to this special time that Jesus directs our attention, saying: Take heed, lest your hearts be overcharged with the cares of this life. (Luke 21:34) To overcome, we need the armor, which God has provided. We obtain it from the Word of God, and it requires time and care to fit it and learn to use it. We cannot, therefore, spare our valuable and needful time to attend to worldly things, plans, and speculations; but only the things *needful*. All else must be laid aside -- every weight -- while we take to ourselves the whole armor of God that we may be *able* to withstand in the conflict of this evil day. (Eph 6:13)"

(Rom 13:12-14 KJV) "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. {13} Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness... {14} But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

R3181 on *Rom 13:12-14* "We should not engage in worldly revelries, time-killing pleasures, harmless though they be, and that we should not be intoxicated with the spirit of this world. As, for instance, some have an intoxication for money, wealth; others an intoxication for business; others for dress; others for music; others for art; but as the Lord's people, who have got a glimpse of the new day, and the great work of God which is to be accomplished in that day, our hearts should be so absorbed in the work of God that these matters...should be far from our conception and our course..."

The saints are to seek more and more to put on the Lord Jesus Christ--to take each to himself the characteristics of the Lord Jesus --his meekness, his patience, his gentleness, his forbearance, his love, his willingness to be servant of all, his temperateness and moderation in all things, his complete devotion to the Father, his complete submission to the holy spirit in all of his affairs.

In thus seeking to be like the Lord the saints are to "make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." They will find the flesh continually insisting that it be recognized, that it be not mortified, that plans and arrangements shall be made for its comfort, pleasure, gratification... They are to do this so thoroughly that they will make no provision for it, but merely provide for the doing of the will of the Lord in all things, whether the will of the Lord be pleasant or unpleasant, agreeable or disagreeable to the flesh."

R3156 "The Christian, as a disciple of the Lord, as a pupil in the school of Christ, is being fitted for a place in the Millennial Kingdom—for a share in its glory, honor and immortality. It is required of such pupils that they shall give diligence... Hence, we see the necessity for the frequent admonitions of the Scripture, that the Lord's people shall be awake; not of those who slumber; not of those who are idle; not of those who are overcharged with the cares of this life; but that they be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Their service toward the Lord is primarily the bringing of themselves into as close harmony with the Lord's will, and into as close likeness to the divine pattern as possible; and secondly, it is that by precept and example they may help others of the called ones in the same narrow way.

R2967 "We are to redeem the time -- to purchase opportunities for the new creature and its interests and concerns, at the expense of the old nature... The opportunities must be thus purchased else we will have none: if we give way to the inclinations of the flesh, its appetites and desires, it will consume all there is of time and opportunity, strength and influence, and leave nothing for the new creature... They present thousands of temptations for worldly pleasure and worldly ease and worldly fame and worldly progress; and thus they multiply the tests which come upon us as 'new creatures.' We must remember that the Lord desires that these tests shall demonstrate the degree of our love, the degree of our sincerity, the degree of our consecration to him: the more our love for the Lord and for righteousness, the greater will be our zeal in snatching time, opportunity, influence for the flesh and consecrating it to spiritual things."

(Mat 6:21 KJV) "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

R874 "The heart's treasure is that for which we would and do make the *greatest* sacrifices of time, strength, convenience, etc ...

What you sacrifice most for, *becomes* your treasure. That which costs us most and which we give most for, we love most, and thus it is proved to be our treasure."