

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

"...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE..." ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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"DO NOT GIVE THE DEVIL A FOOTHOLD"

By Jacob Hudgins

"Do not let the sun go down while you are angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:26-27, NIV).

Every Christian is engaged in a fierce, life-defining battle with Satan. He is our **"adversary"** (1 Pet. 5:8), and he has crafted elaborate **"wiles"** (Eph. 6:11) and **"devices"** (2 Cor. 2:11) to gain ground and win us to his side. In his instruction on dealing with festering anger, Paul warns us: **"do not give the devil a foothold"**—don't make it any easier on him!

This statement teaches us that we must give no ground. The smallest ground, the tiniest foothold, the briefest opportunity is to be zealously guarded against falling into his hand. In this text, unresolved anger that continues to poison our minds and harden into bitterness and malice gives the devil an opening. We will struggle enough with the devil without willingly placing ourselves within his grasp. **"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts"** (Rom. 13:14). Toeing the line of sin or cozying up to temptation to see how close we can get gives ground to the devil, and dramatically increases the chances that we will fall into sin. Don't give the devil even a foothold!

Further, we have power to resist the devil. **"Do not give a foothold"** emphasizes that this is something within

our power to control. The devil can only come as close as we allow him. **“Resist the devil and he will flee from you”** (James 4:7). Though powerful and cunning, the devil can never control our will or force disobedience. Yet active resistance is essential! Satan is not one to lay down his arms and take mercy on us out of pity or generosity. He only flees from those who have the courage and faith to resist him and turn to God's promise and power.

This phrase emphasizes that we need sobriety and vigilance. If we were at war, we would not think of turning our back on the enemy until the battle was won. Negligence in this battle is far more costly. Every advance must be thwarted, each temptation resisted, each subtle lie countered. Not even a foothold can be spared. **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”** (1 Pet. 5:8). This fearful description is motivation for our increased alertness. Practically, we need to watch for people who will turn our hearts to the devil. We need care to ensure that we do not compromise what we know is right for some "gray area" pleasure. We need sobriety to think clearly when our senses are enticed to sin-to see consequences rather than pleasure or convenience.

“Do not give the devil a foothold” is a call to arms-to engage in the battle that will define our lives. Are you ceding ground? Are you watchful? Are you winning?

[borrowed from <http://www.bible.ca/ef/>]

“PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO STAND FIRM AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL” (EPHESIANS 6:11).

YOU CAN'T LOSE

By Rick Lanning

“When you go into battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt” (Deut. 20:1).

Moses gathered the infant nation of Israel to talk war and battle plans. Here is what he told them when they were to face monstrous armies with sophisticated weapons: **“Don’t be afraid!”** Huh? What did you say Moses? He did not stutter. He put it this way: **“Do not be afraid and do not tremble or be terrified, for the Lord God goes with you to fight for you against your enemies and save you!”** (Deut. 20:3).

And to make his point more amazing, he asked if any of the soldiers had recently built a house and failed to dedicate it. All who raised their hands were sent home. He then asked if any had recently planted a vineyard or crops and had not yet harvested and eaten from it. All who raised their hands were sent home. He then asked if any had recently proposed marriage to a future wife but had not yet married. All who raised their hands were sent home to marry. Then, to top it off, he asked if any man was afraid of going into battle. Likely many raised their hands. He sent them home, explaining he did not want any in his army who would discourage the other soldiers. This weeding out process likely reduced Israel’s army to a mere shadow of what it had been (remember Gideon’s story of army reduction from 32,000 to 300 and the victory that followed?).

Do you remember what happened when Joshua led the army to conquer the promised land? **“So Joshua took the whole land, according to all the Lord said to Moses... Then the land rested from war”** (Josh. 11:23). Against all odds YOU CAN’T LOSE when God is with you. Never forget or doubt, **“if God be for us who can be against us”** (Rom. 8:31).

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON:
The People and the Book
(Nehemiah 8)

PM LESSON:
The Vindicated Church
(Revelation 21:9-22:21)

“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)