

Battle Plans

by Bubba Garner

We are at war. I'm not talking about the conflict in Iraq or our battle against terrorism. I mean a different kind of war, a spiritual fight, one where the stakes are much higher. Because this war involves the most dreadful of human casualties, not lives lost but souls. It's not about being stationed away from your family for a few months but eternal separation from God. The enemy is not a nation or a confederation of men but a whole company of other-worldly beings. Imagine what weapons of mass destruction must be at the disposal of these forces of evil, these demons of darkness.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:10-12).

Having given instructions to husbands, wives, children, fathers, slaves and masters, Paul turns his attention to address the entire company of Christians, the soldiers in the army of the living God. Himself a prisoner of war while writing these very words, the apostle has gathered his troops together to give them their marching orders. He knows that the odds are seemingly stacked against them and of their increasing temptation to surrender. What motivational speech could he possibly deliver that would prepare them to war the good warfare?

Rely on the right ally. Be strong “in the Lord” and in the strength of “His” might. One of the reasons that so many people are losing battle after battle with the devil, is because they are trying to do all the fighting themselves. They are self-made, independent, and need help from no one, not even the Lord. Such are destined for failure. Paul said we must work out our own salvation with the knowledge that “it is God who is at work in you” (Phil. 2:12-13). If you want to start beating the devil, get on the right side. Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. To put your strength in anyone else is to be weak.

Get fit for the fight. “Put on” the full armor of God. He has provided the equipment, but you still have to put it on. These pieces don't automatically find their places on your body, you must be diligent in clothing yourself with them. You can march into battle, strong in the strength that God supplies—truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God. And remember, having armor does not make an army. We must put it to use. What good does it do to have the sword of the Spirit if it stays in its sheath?

Give some attention to your weaknesses, not just your strengths. We like to talk about what we can do well, where we're strong. But Satan doesn't attack you on your strong side. He goes for the weak spot. That's why Paul said to put on the "FULL" armor of God. Don't just piece it together. If a baseball can find an opening in the catcher's gear and inflict some damage, what's going to stop the devil from finding the chink in your armor? The whole armor will cover up the holes. However uncomfortable it may be, find your weaknesses so you can guard against them.

Know your enemy. Why should we be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might? Why should we put on the full armor of God? "So that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." The word "schemes" is where we get our word for "methods." That means the devil has many strategies and approaches to deceive us. He does not engage in open warfare, but sneaks around, lurking in the shadows, waiting for a weak moment. We are not "ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11 LBX), unless we make no effort to combat them. As the sign says at the Scott Air Force base in Bellville, Illinois, "An Untrained Soldier is Just a Target."

The war is waging. Who is on the Lord's side? Without Him, you cannot succeed. With Him, you cannot fail.