**23/7/2017**

**Fight the good fight of faith**

2 Timothy 4:6 – 7 (KJV)

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* (firmly held).

Passive resistance is not an option

Never quit or give up

1 Timothy 6: 12 (NKJV)

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Paul was again in prison in Rome (about A.D. 66-67). They were essentially Paul’s last words. This was Paul’s last letter.

* We don’t fight the devil. We resist him by fighting the good fight of faith.
* We can’t have faith beyond our knowledge of God’s Word.
* Starting this journey as a Christian is relatively easy. But finishing is not, particularly in a world that is hostile to God and His people.
* The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint.
* Take note of those who can sprint to the finish line after a lifetime stand.
* We can’t fight when we are running on empty. That’s when we can become spiritual hitchhikers.

The word is a weapon of war. Sword of the Spirit

Good means: – valuable or virtuous, worthy, honourable, noble

Why does Paul refer to it as a “good fight?”

* He didn’t rely on his own strength or ability, he relied totally on God.
* When he was weak, then he was strong – (2 Corinthians 12:10)
* God’s strength is perfected in our weakness.
* A good fight is always linked to faith in God and His Word.

Acts 9: 15 (NKJV)

But the Lord said to him (Ananias), “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of mine to bear my name before gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much things he must suffer for My Name’s sake”. (Not to be more holy)

Mark 4:17 – Affliction or persecution arises for the Word’s sake. The Word didn’t get down in the heart and take root. Only endure for a little while.

* The apostle Paul “proved” (road tested) the new covenant of Grace. He exchanged religion for righteousness – right standing with God.
* Paul’s ministry was afflicted and buffeted because of his witness of the Word of God – but out of them all the Lord delivered him (2 Timothy 3: 11)
* Satan comes to STEAL first (remove the Word).

Mark 4: 15 & John 10: 10

* The sower sows the word but Satan comes immediately to take away the word that was sown in their hearts.

2 Corinthians 10: 3 - 5 (KJV)

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations (reasoning) and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Ephesians 6: 10 - 12 (NLT)

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on all of God’s armour so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Jesus &

Stephens response at death

Matthew 5: 44

The secret to successful combat against Satan is to retaliate in the spirit, not in the natural.

Understanding the authority of the believer

1. We are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6)
2. All power and authority has been given to us (Matthew 28:18)
3. Authority is transferred and carried out by words
4. The Word allows us to see ourselves the way God sees us - overcomers
5. The Word presents an image on the inside - who we are in Christ
6. The authority of the believer is to be used on earth and not in heaven. It is for the here and now
7. We are here to enforce the devil’s defeat, not the other way around.

- Understanding our redemption is key to victory

- Our debt has been paid and we have been declared not guilty

- No one can ever condemn us again, including the devil.

A good soldier knows the strengths and weaknesses of his enemy so they can be exploited.

*Anyone that has a Bible has the truth, but not everyone that has a Bible**knows the truth****.***

Ephesians 6: 13 (NLT)

Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armour so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will be standing firm.

Example (1)

Jesus response to Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4: 4)

* He knew who he was. He had no doubts about His identity
* He didn’t get into a debate or discussion with the devil. Eve could have responded the same way – what God had said.
* His response – It is written. The authority was in the Word.
* Jesus wasn’t fighting, He was resisting temptation with the Word of God. We must do likewise. Only the living Word can take the place of Jesus today.

Example (2)

Jesus response to the death of John the Baptist (Matt 14: 13 - 14)

* He responded with love not hate (Matthew 5: 44 – love, bless, do good, and pray). He didn’t seek revenge. Vengeance is the Lords (Romans 12: 19).
* Jesus was moved with compassion and healed the multitudes.
* Faith works by love (Galatians 5:6).
* There is no law against love (Galatians 5:23).

Example (3)

How Paul and Silas responded in prison (Acts 16: 25 - 34)

* Paul was moved by a night vision to go to Macedonia and preach the gospel.
* Paul stirred up the demonic realm at Philippi by casting out a spirit of divination from a girl.
* Paul was grieved (troubled).
* Note, Paul spoke to the spirit not the girl.
* She was used by her masters to make money for them.
* As a result, Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten and thrown into prison.
* Outward circumstances can cause us to questions God’s leading and timing.
* Paul obeyed the leading of the Spirit and ended up beaten and imprisoned.
* They responded in the spirit through prayer and praise to God.
* The faith response is unreasonable (rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice - Philippians 4: 4).
* But look at the result – an entire family was wonderfully saved.

Example (4)

Jehoshaphat victory over his enemies (2 Chronicles 20)

* They were powerless in the natural.
* The king sought the Lord.
* He declared a fast and prayed to God.
* Reminded God of His covenant with Israel. The land was given to them.
* We do not know what to do, but we are looking to You.
* God responded through His prophet.
* Don’t be afraid or dismayed. The battle is not yours but God’s.

**So, what can compromise or weaken our stand?**

Ephesians 6:13 – stand means to make firm, to fix or establish.

Psalm 112: 7 - 8 – His heart is established – or to stand fast.

**Wrong thinking**

Romans 12: 2 - 3 (NLT)

Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Philippians 4: 8 (NLT)

Fix your thoughts on God and His ways and attributes.

**Wrong believing**

Matthew 22:29 (NLT)

Jesus replied, “Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God.”

John 5: 46 – 47 *(note John 6: 29)*

If you won’t believe the writings of Moses, how shall you believe my words

**Wrong speaking**

Proverbs 18:21

Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

Matthew 12: 37

The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.

**Our understanding of redemption**

* Our understanding of redemption is key.
* Our debt has been paid and we have been declared ‘not guilty’.
* No man can change his nature, but God can.

Colossians 2: 13 – 14 (NLT)

Hebrews 10: 12 – 14 (NLT)

Hebrews 8: 12 (NLT)

2 Corinthians 5: 19 – 20 (NLT)

Romans 8: 1 – 2 (no one can ever condemn us again)

The revelation given to Paul is a master stroke of divine grace.

The disciples didn’t understand it during the ministry of Jesus. It was hidden from them.

Luke and Mark ministered with Paul, but they never wrote about ‘justification by faith’ in the Gospels. They were constrained by the Spirit.

The Word should always be the Father speaking to us. It is eternal.

Only the living Word can take the place of Jesus.

When we open the Word, it is a living thing that we are implanting into the hearts of men.

**Lack of spiritual growth / preparation**

When we are in a fight is not the time to start preparing for the battle.

Hebrews 5: 12 – 14 (NLT)

You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead you need one to teach you again the basic things about God’s Word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food.

For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn’t know how to do what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

1 Corinthians 3: 1 – 3

Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn’t talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren’t ready for anything stronger. And you still aren’t ready.

Colossians 3: 1 – 3

Set your mind on things above.

“*Spiritual hitchhikers*”

* Always depend on some else’s prayers, wisdom, faith and interpretation of the Word of God.
* They are ***running on empty*** and need a ‘spiritual lift’ to go forward
* No Word, no ability to STAND.

**David v Goliath – Spiritual v Natural**

1 Samuel 17

* Goliath was picking for a fight
* Saul and Israel heard his words – they were dismayed and greatly feared *(terrified and deeply shaken)* (Samuel 17: 11).

***FEAR TOLERATED IS FAITH CONTAMINATED***

* Who is this pagan Philistine anyway that he is allowed to defy the armies of the living God (verse 26 (b)?
* “Don’t worry about this Philistine”, David told Saul. “I’ll go fight him”. (V. 32)
* David grew in faith through the lion and bear experiences – He acknowledged God as the deliverer. He would do the same with Goliath.
* Saul’s armour represented man’s efforts. David was relying totally on God.
* David replied to the Philistine, “You come to me with sword, spear and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies – the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied (1 Samuel 17: 45 NLT).
* David spoke out the end from the beginning (verses 46 – 47).
* The battle is the Lord’s and He WILL give you into our hands.
* David ran towards Goliath. Faith always runs toward the enemy (Verse 48).

So, fight the good fight of faith

* Fight for your family
* Fight for your marriage
* Fight for your children
* Fight for your health
* Fight for your church.