

LEARN TO FIGHT

After last Sunday evening, when I spoke on *"Making Way for the Blessings of God,"* I am sure that all of us have been praying for God's blessings to increase. However, as the blessings of God multiply, so too will the things that oppose us. The devil is bent on highjacking our blessings. He does not want us to be blessed; he wants to steal our testimony. In this regard, while I believe that God wants to bless us, I also believe that God wants to teach us **how to fight**. For any of us to complete a God-given assignment (be successful) we will have to go into battle. Therefore, God wants us to be tough and vigilant.

2 Samuel 22:32-36, "For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God? God is my strength and power; and He makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and sets me on my high places. He teaches my hands to make war. So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; your gentleness has made me great."

It is the Lord who teaches our hands to make war. We were created to conquer, to have dominion. It is not God's intention for us to be timid and weak, but strong and courageous. Unless you are prepared to boldly confront the obstacles and challenges that block the path to your promised land, there is no way you can receive what God has for you. That is why people who are fearful and procrastinate never accomplish anything in life. Most of the time, procrastinators are looking for ways to reach their goals without going through any struggles. Remember, there are various tests and trials that you will have to go through before the Lord can release His abundant blessings into your life. Therefore, if you are making way for the blessings of God to flow into your life, you must adopt a militant attitude. You must be prepared to fight!

If it is God who teaches our hands to make war, how does He do it? How does He make sure we win every battle? And what weapons has He given us? 2 Corinthians 10:4 states that, ***“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.”*** Let’s start by examining the weapons of our warfare. After all, it would be very foolish to pick a fight without first knowing what you have in your hands to fight with! We need to be more proactive and less reactive. We need to take the battle to the enemy and stop being on the defensive all the time. The Word of God tells us that, ***“The gates of hell cannot prevail against the church”*** (Matthew 16:18). So we should go into enemy territory without fear or apprehension, knowing that the victory is ours!

Concerning our weapons, we have been given offensive and defensive instruments of war. Our offensive weapon is the **Sword of the Spirit** - the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17), and our defensive weapon is the **Shield of Faith** (Ephesians 6:16). ***“....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.”*** Notice that greater emphasis is placed on the shield of faith, it says, ***“Above all, taking the shield of faith.”*** Therefore, let us take heed of this advice and start by examining our defensive instrument of war.

Another translation of 2 Samuel 22:36 says, ***“You give me Your shield of victory; You stoop down to make me great.”*** Therefore, the shield also represent victory. The **Shield of Faith** must be understood and effectively used to establish the victory that God intends for us. But many believers tell of the war stories when they stood in faith and it did not work. But instead of questioning God and His ways let us examine our own faith. Let’s take responsibility for our presumptions. The problem is never with God, He is faithful and completely reliable.

We must never walk in the denial or disillusionment that comes as a result of the misunderstandings of our faith. A better understanding of faith will help us to exercise better discernment (better judgement) and deal with the problems caused when our faith gets off track. Instead of feeling that we have been abandoned by God let us abandon our own self assurance and wild assumptions. Yes, you may have heard from God, you may have received His instructions, and you may have even been guided by the Holy Spirit, but the truth is, you lost the fight. So what went wrong? Never be afraid to ask tough questions concerning your faith. Remember, you were created to be a victor not a victim.

Back to our **shield of faith**.... The soldiers of Rome always had two shields. One was a parade shield and the other was a battle shield. The parade shield was an oversized medallion carried on one arm that barely covered the chest. The battle shield, of which Paul was speaking, was much larger and more robust. This shield was about 2 feet wide, 4 feet tall and 6 inches thick. It was made of six or more layers of animal hide sewn together to become nearly as strong as steel. This shield was designed to withstand heavy blows. As a believer most of the deadliest attacks will come against our faith. When the enemy wants to inflict serious damage, only genuine faith can stop him. *“Above all, taking your shield of faith with you.”*

If we do not know how to maintain our “faith” then our shield will fail when the enemy attacks. A cracked or broken shield in battle is a disaster, not just for the soldier but for the whole army because an effective army functions as one unit. The power of unity in a church is demonstrated when we understand the **shield of faith** and advance into enemy territory together. In battle, many times soldiers would link their shields together and then push forward. For one broken shield could stop the entire advance and jeopardise the assignment.

A broken and useless shield means that a gap is left which the opposing army can penetrate. In the same way we must be connected together by our faith. The unity of Cornerstone depends on all of us connecting our faith, and the battle becomes much harder every time one of our member's shield fails. Each shield must be vigorously maintained! A Roman soldier knew that the leather on his shield had to be treated or it would dry out, crack and eventually break. So he attended to it every day. Before doing anything else, it was required of a soldier to oil his battle-shield. Any soldier who ignored the care of his battle shield was risking death.

Notice that in Scripture the shield represents our **faith** and the oil represents the **Holy Spirit**. Our faith must be applied daily with the anointing oil of the Holy Spirit. Without the anointing on your faith it will become dry and brittle. Consequently, we enter the battlefield only to find that our faith cannot sustain us. Even when a Roman soldier got a pass to go home, his shield went with him because it still had to be maintained. He would leave his helmet, breastplate, and the rest of the armour but he would take his shield with him and oil it every day. Likewise, our faith needs to be drenched in the Holy Spirit daily. It's the anointing oil that sustain and maintains our faith.

Along with this daily maintenance we need to "prepare" the shield before we go into battle. A Roman soldier would soak his shield in water so that the fiery arrows aimed at him would be extinguished when they hit his shield. Paul speaks of the flaming arrows that are aimed at us. It is these arrows that need to be extinguished. In the Bible, water often represents the **Word of God**. Therefore, we need to be immersed in the word before we head out into battle. A thorough soaking in the Word of God is essential for the effective use of our battle-shield of faith.

Whenever we take on the enemy we need to be biblically grounded. Too many Christians think that all they need is battle experience, and an anointing, and then they're ready for war. But battle skills and the anointing alone will not establish the victory. Both are important, yet neither can quench the fiery darts of the enemy. Especially when going behind enemy lines! It's only the "truth" of the Word that extinguishes the flaming arrows.

One of the flaming arrows used in battle had a hollow shaft in which oil was poured. Upon impact the arrow would explode into flames. It was designed to spread the fire quickly and cause panic and confusion. Many of Satan's arrows are designed to cause confusion. He wants to panic us into not using our battle-shield of Faith. That way he secures his position and forces us into submission. Ephesians 4:27-28 says, "***Do not give the devil a foothold.***" A foothold for the enemy is a secure place where he feels comfortable in your circumstances. From there he can implement all his evil plans and keep you from receiving God's blessings.

However, that need not be the case. You have the Holy Spirit and God's Word which you can apply to your faith daily. What's more, the **Word of God** is not meant just for soaking your shield, it is also the offensive weapon that God has placed in your hand. It is the **Sword of the Spirit**. In close combat, it defeats the devil every time! So don't be afraid to confront the enemy "close up," because that is when your sword is most effective.

With the **Shield of faith** and the **Sword of the Spirit**, you can boldly advance into enemy territory and take back everything that the devil has stolen. You can plunder his domain and populate your own. Yes, in all these things you are more than a conqueror through Christ who loved you! (Romans 8:37) Let us end by reading 2 Samuel 22:32-36 again.....