

WAGING WAR: FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

by Mark Huey

For the unbelieving, “natural” human person who is bereft of the Spirit of God, journeying through time on *terra firma*—life is a series of struggles with elemental realities, ranging from: simple survival, thriving by one’s own faculties and five senses, and achieving success without either knowledge or experience of dimensions beyond this one.¹ Whether it is the vagaries of different societal environments that have developed over the millennia around the world, an occasionally predictable climate or unexpected natural disasters requiring shelter to prevent death, the ubiquitous thorns and thistles impeding food production, the challenges of capturing game or raising edible livestock, or simply avoiding the violent intrusions of self-justifying humans seeking to conquer in order to survive—maintaining physical life can be compared to a series of battles to minimally endure and perpetuate the species.

Beyond the base instincts for survival on this physical plane, the Holy Scriptures inform us of other dimensions that are not tangible to the naked human eye, but exist as a largely unseen spirit world. This is a realm that is real to God and His angels, as well as the Devil and his forces. Many have been able to experience some contact with this “other universe,” and some people have been able to be given a glimpse of these realities long before death (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). Most Believers simply have to possess the faith that there is something beyond *this* current universe, and not give themselves any reason to doubt. Those who are able to experience a degree of Heaven—right now on Earth—are those who have been uniquely endowed with the Spirit of God. According to the Apostle Paul, as he communicated the distinctions between natural and spiritual people to the Believers in Corinth, those indwelt by God’s Spirit have a unique capacity to interact with Him:

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. But a natural man [unspiritual man, RSV] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Corinthians 2:12-14).

The Armor of God

Eventually over the course of time and experience, those who are filled with the Holy Spirit—and are increasingly matured and enlightened in their relationship with the Creator—become more sensitive and in tune to the other entities which inhabit and operate in the cosmos. While we should be aware of the forces

¹ This article has been reproduced from the forthcoming *Messianic Torah Helper* (due sometime 2011).

of light that are at our disposal as the people of God (i.e., Psalm 91:11-12; 1 Corinthians 6:3), we are to be most aware and discerning of the forces of darkness. The Apostle Peter admonishes, “Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). The Apostle Paul’s specific instruction—in recognizing the different rulers, powers, and forces of evil darkness—is that the people of God are to take upon themselves His armor:

“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*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH [Isaiah 11:5], and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS [Isaiah 59:17], and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE [Isaiah 52:7]; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION [Isaiah 59:17], and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:12-17).

After describing how “we are not contending” (RSV) or “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood” (ESV), likened unto a kind of “battle” (HCSB), Paul describes a variety of key weapons that are to be employed against the Adversary. The Lord Himself is described as a Warrior who goes out to battle for His people. Isaiah 42:13 exclaims, “The LORD will go forth like a warrior, He will arouse *His* zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against His enemies.” Psalm 35:1-3 says, “Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of buckler and shield and rise up for my help. Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me; say to my soul, ‘I am your salvation.’” Part of being an imitator of God (Ephesians 5:1) is going out and joining the fight against evil! The various elements of the armor of God are derived directly from the Tanakh:

Girded Loins and the Breastplate of Righteousness:

“But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist” (Isaiah 11:4-5).

“He put on righteousness like a breastplate...” (Isaiah 59:17).

Feet Shod with the Gospel of Peace

“How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, *and* says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isaiah 52:7).

Shield of Faith

“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not fear, Abram, I **am a shield to you**; Your reward shall be very

great” (Genesis 15:1).

“For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD, You surround him with favor as with a shield...As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the LORD is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him...The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart exults, and with my song I shall thank Him” (Psalm 5:12; 18:30; 28:7).

Helmet of Salvation²

“...a helmet of salvation on His head...” (Isaiah 59:17).³

The analogies of girded loins or belt for protection, a chest covering breastplate, appropriate protective shoes, a shield, a helmet, and a sword, all suggest that the struggle God’s people are to endure is *interminable warfare* going from battle to battle. The implied fact that the faithful soldier of God can utilize His truth, His righteousness, the gospel of peace, personal faith, the salvation experience, and the (spoken) Word of God⁴ is to give him or her great comfort. But if these spiritual weapons and tools are not employed during the frequent skirmishes, then victory over the Devil and his temptations will not be achieved. Paul elaborates on this point to the Corinthians, as he notes that within the spiritual war we fight, we are to take every thought captive, and see that any speculation or lofty thing raised up against God is taken down:

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. **We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God**, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Messiah, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete” (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).

The False Teaching in Ephesus

Recognizing that there is an ongoing spiritual battle taking place between the forces of light and darkness, some of it seen and some of it unseen (or not obvious), we should not be surprised to see how refuting speculations is something elaborated on within Paul’s letters. In 1 Timothy, the Apostle Paul has left his junior ministry partner behind in order to solve a complicated problem that had erupted, and how to get the brothers and sisters back on a proper course of faith. In the opening statements of what are commonly called the Pastoral Epistles (also

² Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

³ Also detailing the armor of God is Wisdom 5:17-20 in the Apocrypha:

“The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armor, and will arm all creation to repel his enemies; he will put on righteousness as a breastplate, and wear impartial justice as a helmet; he will take holiness as an invincible shield, and sharpen stern wrath for a sword, and creation will join with him to fight against the madmen.”

For a further evaluation of the armor of God, consult the commentary *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee.

⁴ Ephesians 6:17 employs *rhēma Theou* (ῥῆμα θεοῦ) and is likely the spoken gospel message of salvation (cf. Ephesians 5:26). The principal way this is to be accomplished is obviously using the written Word of God.

including Titus, 2 Timothy), Paul turns immediately to the crux of the false teaching that Timothy would have to face. But, rather than this being an entirely outside threat to the Believers, the battle that Timothy must wage is against what could be compared to a fifth column within the congregation(s), brought on by a sector of people whose aim is to not only disrupt the assembly, but see that its established leadership and teachers are usurped:

“As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than *furthering* the administration of God which is by faith. But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted” (1 Timothy 1:3-11).

Messianic Believers frequently struggle over these verses, often because they are quoted by various Christian friends or family members or associates against their Torah observance, completely removed from their ancient context. *These are not statements “putting down” the Torah.* The main thrust of the false teaching in Ephesus was how it was associated with “myths and endless genealogies” (1 Timothy 1:4),⁵ which could have been derived from the Torah, but are claims made by those who “want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm” (1 Timothy 1:7, NIV). These are people⁶ who lack the skills and abilities to understand the Torah, and so they are willing to either exaggerate things about it, or they just flat make up myths and stories to gain a following. There are various proposals made about what “myths” could have been circulating, as summarized by Gordon D. Fee:

“[W]hat they were precisely is not available to us, although there have been several suggestions (such as the kinds of speculations one finds in the *Book of Jubilees* or in Philo’s *Questions and Answers on Genesis* or in Pseudo-Philo’s *Book of Biblical Antiquities* or even in the Jewish haggadic tradition [illustrative commentary on the OT]). It must be finally admitted that we simply do not know, because Paul does not give us enough clues.”⁷

The best option we actually have for the false teaching is that Paul’s refer-

⁵ Grk. *muthois kai genealogiais aperantois* (μύθοις καὶ γενεαλογίαις ἀπεράντοις).

⁶ The source text only has *tisin* (τισῖν) or “certain persons” (1 Timothy 1:3, RSV), which is important if females were involved in helping to perpetuate the false teaching (cf. 1 Timothy 2:12; 5:13).

⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *New International Biblical Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), pp 41-42.

ence to “genealogies” pertains to figures in the Torah who are not spoken of that much (i.e., the lists of Genesis 5 and 11), but for whom there is a significant amount of commentary and writing (and some exaggeration) in various extra-Biblical works, figures for whom embellished teachings could be easily contrived. It is very possible that the figure of Eve held some significance for the false teaching, and the sway the false teaching held over some of the Ephesian women (1 Timothy 2:13-14).

Recognizing that a feature of the false teaching was the errant idea that the resurrection had taken place (2 Timothy 2:18), this gave rise to bad practices like abstaining from marriage or eating meat (1 Timothy 4:1-5), as both marriage/sex and meat eating were features of human life *after* the Fall of humanity, and hence were not believed to be that “good.” In order to return to a so-called idealistic state like that experienced in Eden, Believers were to follow an ascetic lifestyle. Ironically enough, though, the false teaching in Ephesus had many inconsistencies, so while forbidding marriage or eating meat was practiced, the false teachers used their speculations as a means of obtaining wealth (1 Timothy 6:9-10). Likewise, many young widows who had abstained from getting remarried, nevertheless wanted to do so (1 Timothy 5:11-12).⁸

The point made by Paul is really quite obvious: there is an improper usage of God’s Torah that can lead to vain speculations and will not help His people (1 Timothy 1:4), fueled by individuals who want to be “Torah teachers.” There is a proper usage of the Torah in contrast to this—“We know that the law is good if one uses it properly” (1 Timothy 1:8, NIV)—which is how it is to identify high crimes and prescribe appropriate punishments. As Paul puts it, “the law is laid down⁹ not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane” (1 Timothy 1:9, NRSV). One of the main, **and most obvious purposes**, of reading and studying God’s Torah, is to see how it identifies and condemns sin.

The able teacher of the Torah should be able to explain how the Messiah has come to die in our stead, because of our common human inability to obey. *Our disobedience to the Torah should lead us to the Messiah and us pleading for God’s mercy and deliverance* (cf. Romans 10:4, Grk.; Galatians 3:24). But for some reason or another, the false teachers Timothy had to contend with in Ephesus were not interested in these things. They wanted “meaningless talk” (1 Timothy 1:6, NRSV/TNIV), having “lost themselves in endless words” (Philips New Testament).¹⁰

Given the fact that the false teachers are not lauded for their knowledge (1 Timothy 6:30), if any ancient extra-Biblical works were considered by them, they could have easily misunderstood them *in addition* to the Scriptures themselves. There is a proper place for certain bodies of extra-Biblical literature as background material or contemporary history for understanding the Scriptures.

⁸ In the estimation of William D. Mounce, “This suggests that the Ephesian heresy was not a well-formulated doctrine but rather a collection of loosely associated ideas without internal consistency” (*Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*, Vol. 46 [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000], pp 290-291).

⁹ Grk. *keimai* (κείμαι); “of laws...the law is laid down...the penalty is fixed by law” (*LS*, 425).

AMG further describes, “In Matt. 3:10 and Luke 3:9, in regard to the ax that lies at the root of the trees, it does not simply mean that it is lying there, but also implies the necessity of its being taken up and used” (Zodhiates, *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 855).

False Teachings and Myths—Then and Now

We should not be too surprised if some of the spiritual battles, that Timothy encountered in First Century Ephesus, are very similar to what continues today within some assemblies of Believers. False teaching will always exist as either an external or internal foe, which is to be identified and confronted. Those in positions of leadership and teaching are to take charge of situations when they encounter them, not just as shepherds, but as Paul says, “I urged you...” (1 Timothy 1:3). He uses the verb *parangellō* (παραγγέλλω), which was commonly employed in classical terms “generally, to give the word, give orders, of the general” (LS).¹⁰ Those who are responsible for instructing and mentoring God’s people in a full time capacity are, in many ways, to serve them like a general would his army. This requires skill and eloquence, but sometimes sternness in confronting problems. (Even though, coming from a Navy family, I do think that the Lord probably has “admirals” too).

Paul’s warning is that the false teachers have wandered away from “the aim of our charge [which] is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5, RSV). They want to be Torah teachers, but they lack the ability to really understand the holy text which they try to interpret. In a First Century setting, it could very well have been that many of the teachers were not only not adequately taught or trained, but that they might even have struggled with basic literacy. While being a teacher or rabbi in the ancient Synagogue was most admirable, a self-deceived person will cut corners in order to gain a following. It does not matter if such a “teacher” shares things that are inappropriate, grossly exaggerated, or just outright made up. What matters is being *an influence*. Timothy certainly had a mess to clean up in ancient Ephesus, precisely because the false teachers “set themselves up as experts on religious issues, but haven’t the remotest idea of what they’re holding forth with such imposing eloquence” (1 Timothy 1:7, The Message).

Were the false teachers even concerned about making sure that what they shared was accurate? Were they at all careful with evaluating whether or not what they taught was edifying to the Body of Messiah? Timothy was charged by Paul to challenge what these teachers had done, but not so much directly. Paul informs him instead, “Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching” (1 Timothy 6:13). While there would have probably been some instances of direct confrontation, and 1 Timothy 3 records how some new leaders had to be chosen to replace old ones, most of the attention of the Ephesians needed to be refocused back onto the Scriptures and to diligent, consistent teaching from the Word. As this would take place, the bankruptcy of the false teachers and their inabilities would naturally be exposed. Timothy and the Ephesians are instructed,

“If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid inter-

¹⁰ For further elaboration on the false teaching in Ephesus, consult the commentary *The Pastoral Epistles for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee (forthcoming).

¹¹ LS, 594.

est in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain" (1 Timothy 6:3-5).

Spiritual warfare and confronting the Devil's schemes has been around for a very long time. Unfortunately, there will always be disputes, envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction among groupings of those who serve the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **This most frequently happens because people forget about the centrality of Yeshua in their walk of faith.** And it is also most unfortunate that some of the same scene of 1 Timothy 1:3-11 can be tangibly observed today.

It hits our family ministry particularly hard when we read a passage like 1 Timothy 1:3-11, because when you consider the warnings against weird myths exaggerated from the Torah, contrasted against sound moral and ethical teaching from the Torah—you can naturally think of many contemporary examples in today's Messianic movement. *You can understand why some people even call it the "Messy-antic" movement.* Much of the division, discord, and strife that we have seen over the years, is directly rooted in the divergent opinions and strong personalities of those who precisely "want to be teachers of *Torah*, but they understand neither their own words nor the matters about which they make such emphatic pronouncements" (1 Timothy 1:7, CJB). We have seen this manifested in clever, entertaining teaching styles, and an ability to tickle unsuspecting ears with self-mined "nuggets" of no spiritual value. The conditions mentioned by Paul to Timothy in his second letter have been upon us in full force, with a cadre of advocates to perpetuate an array of false teachings:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

There are many specific examples I could list of false teachers who circulate in the midst of our Messianic faith community, who love the applause, the oohs and ahhs, the adoration they receive, or how they are able to sell large numbers of their CDs or DVDs to finance their enterprises. Many of them claim to be "Torah teachers," but they are not suited to be called "teachers" of any kind. They will often talk about specific teachings from "the Sages" of Judaism, but then fail to tell us who these Sages specifically are, or provide us references from their teachings or writings. They will focus on mystical and mythical ideas based in the Torah, but not Scripture itself. The pseudo-scholarly babble which they peddle is not engaged with either the Biblical text or substantiated with documentation from real Biblical Studies from the past century. Most disturbing, to be sure, such materials often do not encourage an understanding of the high ethical and moral matters of the Torah, and certainly not "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:11).¹²

The answer to fixing these things, however, is not for us to sit around in some pity party and whine and complain about the problems we have witnessed. Rather, each of us has to expel the required effort to change some of the current

religious culture of the Messianic movement. There is a proper or lawful way to use Moses' Teaching (1 Timothy 1:8)¹³ as means of instructing men and women how to live as God's holy people (Leviticus 19:2; Deuteronomy 28:9), impacting our evil generation. God's Torah is improperly used when one uses it as a springboard for deriving myths and fairy tales to be easily sold (1 Timothy 1:4).

The answer to fixing some of our challenges is actually quite simple, but profound. We have to be dedicated to have a Messianic movement where we all "stimulate one another to love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24), and in living forth those weightier matters of the Torah like "justice and mercy and faithfulness" (Matthew 23:23). We have to focus our attention to the Scriptures, and recognize that anything which takes us away from really being able to demonstrate these qualities to the world, might at times be "fruitless discussion" (1 Timothy 1:6). *May the Father grant each of us the discernment we need to accomplish His will!*

Fight the Good Fight

Anyone who follows after the Lord Yeshua needs to recognize that those born from above are presently engaged in a spiritual war. This is doubly or triply true of those of us called into full time service as teachers and leaders of the *ekklēsia*. We all have the firm responsibility, though, of recognizing how "Messiah Yeshua came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15), and how any false teachers, false prophets, or false brethren we may encounter **can experience the goodness of salvation and change from their wicked ways**. Frequently, though, this does not happen. Instead, faithful Believers have to often confront insidious and ungodly influences, and be ready to combat their negative effects on the unsuspecting, the naive, and the immature. Paul's exhortation to Timothy, and by extension us today, is to fight the good fight of faith:

"This command I entrust to you, Timothy, *my* son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them **you fight the good fight**,¹⁴ keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith" (1 Timothy 1:18-19).

In Timothy's case, he apparently had some kind of a prophetic word spoken over him, which would serve as definitive personal encouragement to press forward as a leader (cf. 1 Timothy 4:14). Many of us as well, be we Jewish or non-Jewish Believers, have entered into the Messianic movement via unique life circumstances. *We know this is where God's wants us*, even though it might be easier at times (and during a weak moment) to think about going back to a more "normal" or "familiar" synagogue or church setting. Some of us know that with all of the potential the Messianic perspective possesses—especially with the restora-

¹³ The FAQ section of the TNN Online website <www.tnnonline.net> includes some entries on the kinds of popular "teachings" promoted today by some of these people.

Also consult the article "The Effect of Mysticism and Gnosticism on the Messianic Movement" by J.K. McKee.

¹⁴ The term *nomimōs* (νομίμως) means, "pert. to being in accordance with normal procedure, in accordance with rule(s)/law" (BDAG, 676).

¹⁴ Grk. *hina strateuē en autais tēn kalēn strateian* (ἵνα στρατεύῃ ἐν αὐταῖς τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν).

tion of all Israel on the horizon—that we really are in for the battle of our lives!

Paul communicates the seriousness of the spiritual war that is waged, by using some familiar terms that have influenced modern English. 1 Timothy 1:18 employs the verb *strateuō* (στρατεύω)¹⁵ and the noun *strateia* (στρατεία), from which “to strategize” and “strategy” are obviously derived. Another related term, *stratiōtēs* (στρατιώτης), appears in Paul’s second correspondence to Timothy. Paul details how the life of faith frequently involves suffering, is like a soldier in battle, is like an athletic competition, and is also like being a diligent farmer tending his crops:

“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Messiah Yeshua. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Messiah Yeshua. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything” (2 Timothy 2:1-7).

These different descriptions of what it means to be faithful to the Lord, stand in considerable contrast to the qualities of the false teacher—who is a false teacher precisely because he lacks patience. A soldier is required to remain at his post, following the orders of the general without question. A soldier has been trained to fight with skill and brevity, and those who lack the courage and commitment *wash out*. Athletes who break the rules are disqualified from competition. Farmers who do not tend to the field not only do not see their crops grow; they do not eat!

What does this say about those who serve the Lord as His foot soldiers? *We each have to endure suffering due to the travails of spiritual warfare*. Yet, if we are committed to serving God in whatever capacity we might find ourselves, then as we step out in faith and trust, He will prevail. Teachers especially must be committed to the work in which the Holy One of Israel has called them, as they must understand how paramount it is that they are accountable for a stricter judgment (James 3:1). As important as many areas of service are, expositing on the Word of God and offering applications for a modern-day setting, will affect how people make life choices and decisions. Teaching from the Scriptures is by no means so one can promote myths, gain a following, and accrue great riches (1 Timothy 1:4; 6:5)!

The Ongoing Battle

Recognizing that there is a spiritual war waging—much of it seen, and much of it unseen—inside and outside of the assembly, what should today’s Believers be doing to mitigate the damage and fallout? How should we be able to confront nefarious underminings from without, and blindsided bombardments from without? Certainly, employing the weapons of spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:12-17) and learning to fight better and more effectively is a place for each of us to start.

¹⁵ “to serve in war, serve as a soldier, do military service, take the field, march” (LS, 748).

In our current day, the only collateral damage we might expect to receive in fighting the Adversary is that we might get some people, who have been influenced by him, upset and mad at us. When you confront bad teachings and myths, false teachers whose reputation and income are at stake, will frequently attack back at you.

For the future, though, we are steadily approaching the End of the Age and the return of Messiah Yeshua. Within the Book of Revelation the saints are said to hold on to their faith most strongly, in order to overcome the wiles of the Devil. John records, “they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death” (Revelation 12:11). Of course, even if one does not face martyrdom, we should still gain inspiration from this to press forward in our faith! We are to have each experienced (1) the redeeming power of the sacrificial blood of the Lamb, Yeshua, (2) have a great testimony of salvation, and (3) not love our lives more than being willing to die for the Messiah. The Apostle Paul knew that to live is Messiah and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21), and wanted to be conformed to His example so much that he even wanted to die and be resurrected in a manner similar to his Lord:

“[T]hat I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11).

The life of faith is not easy, but if we are able to place the Messiah Yeshua at the center of who we are, and we wear the armor of God, then the diligence and perseverance to fight the good fight of faith on a consistent basis makes the army of God unbeatable. Of course, there may be some setbacks along the way, and some casualties of spiritual war will be encountered on the battlefield—but in the long run, victory is promised to the saints. We have to pray for the perseverance to endure in a long struggle, because not only is careful strategy and discernment necessary (cf. 1 Timothy 1:18), but as Paul also says to Timothy, *agōnizou ton kalon agōna* (ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα) or “agonize the good agony” (1 Timothy 6:12, EXP).¹⁶ **The life of faith will be difficult**, but when set in view of the eternal King, our Messiah Yeshua, each of us can make it to the end:

“Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Messiah Yeshua, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him *be* honor and eternal dominion! Amen. (1 Timothy 6:12-16).

Faithfully wage the war, and fight the good fight!

Until the restoration of all things...

¹⁶ Ralph Earle, “1 Timothy,” in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. et. al., *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 11:386.