

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts March 2018

The Great Battle

By: J.C. Ryle



READER, All men ought to love peace. War is an immense evil, though it is a necessary evil sometimes. Battles are bloody and distressing events, though sometimes nations cannot maintain their rights without them. But all men ought to love peace. All ought to pray for a quiet life.

All this is very true, and yet there is one war which it is a positive duty to carry on; there is one battle which we ought to be always fighting. The battle I speak of is the battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. With these enemies we never ought to be at peace; from this warfare no man ought ever to seek to be discharged, while he is alive.

Reader, give me your attention for a few minutes, and I will tell you something about the great battle.

Every professing Christian is the soldier of Christ. He is bound by his baptism to fight Christ's battle against sin, the world, and the devil. The man that does not do this, breaks his vow: he is a spiritual defaulter; he does not fulfil the engagement made for him. The man that does not do this, is practically renouncing his Christianity. The very fact that he belongs to a Church, attends a Christian place of worship, and calls himself a Christian, is a public declaration that he desires to be reckoned a soldier of Jesus Christ.

Armour is provided for the professing Christian, if he will only use it. "Take unto you," says Paul to the Ephesians, "the whole armour of God." "Stand, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness." "Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of

God." "Above all, take the shield of faith" (Ephes. vi. 13-17). And not least, the professing Christian has the best of leaders,—Jesus the Captain of salvation, through whom he may be more than conqueror; the best of provisions,—the bread and water of life; and the best of pay promised to him,—an eternal weight of glory.

All these are ancient things. I will not be drawn off to dwell on them now.

The one point I want to impress on your soul just now is this,—that if you want to be saved, you must not only be a soldier, but a victorious soldier. You must not only profess to fight on Christ's side against sin, the world, and the devil, but you must actually fight and overcome.

Now this is one grand distinguishing mark of true Christians. Other men perhaps like to be numbered in the ranks of Christ's army; other men may have lazy wishes, and languid desires after the crown of glory: but it is the true Christian alone who does

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the work of a soldier. He alone fairly meets the enemies of his soul, really fights with them, and in that fight overcomes them.

Reader, one great lesson I wish you to learn this day is this,—that if you would prove you are born again and going to heaven, you must be a victorious soldier of Christ. If you would make it clear that you have any title to Christ’s precious promises, you must fight the good fight in Christ’s cause, and in that fight you must conquer.

Victory is the only satisfactory evidence that you have a saving religion. You like good sermons, perhaps; you respect the Bible, and read it occasionally; you say your prayers night and morning; you have family prayers, and give to religious societies. I thank God for this: it is all very good. But how goes the battle? How does the great conflict go on all this

time? Are you overcoming the love of the world and the fear of man? Are you overcoming the passions, tempers, and lusts of your own heart? Are you resisting the devil, and making him flee from you? How is it in this matter? My dear brother or sister, you must either rule or serve sin, and the devil, and the world. There is no middle course. You must either conquer or be lost. ...

I do fear much for many professing Christians: I see no sign of fighting in them, much less of victory; they never strike one stroke on the side of Christ. They are at peace with His enemies: they have no quarrel with sin. Reader, I warn you this is not Christianity: this is not the way to heaven. ...

Men and women who hear the Gospel regularly, I often fear much for you. I fear lest you become so familiar with the sounds of its doctrines, that insensibly you become dead to its power. I fear lest your religion should sink down into a little vague talk about your own weakness and corruption, and a few sentimental expressions about Christ, while real practical fighting on

Christ’s side is altogether neglected. Oh, beware of this state of mind! “Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only.” No victory,—no crown! Fight and overcome! ...

For one thing, let me warn all formalists and self-righteous people to take heed that they are not deceived. You fancy you will go to heaven because you go regularly to church; you indulge an expectation of eternal life, because you are always at the Lord’s table, and are never missing in your pew. But where is your repentance? Where is your faith? Where are your evidences of a new heart? Where is the work of the Spirit? Where are the proofs that you are fighting the great battle? Oh, formal Christian, consider these questions! Tremble: tremble, and repent. ...

Reader, the great battle must be fought by all who want to be saved. And more than this, it must be won.

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