

# 10 The Church - Militant and Triumphant

## (Part 2)

### Introduction

A friend of mine recently asked what I was preaching on and I said the church. He said, "The what?" I said "the church."

"You are going to preach about the church at church?"

"Yes."

That struck him as really weird. The fact that it struck him as so odd is perhaps a good reason that we need to hear it. Many people may not even know that it is a subject that the Bible talks about. They think that church is just something we do, but the reality of it is, scripture has quite a lot to say about the church. In fact I think it has so much to say that we need to experience a paradigm shift in our understanding of it.

We are in a series on the church and last week we began talking about the church militant and the church triumphant. We gave a couple of quick definitions which are that the church militant are all the believers alive on the earth today, and the church triumphant are all those who have died in Christ and are now reigning with him.

We spent the bulk of the time on the church militant. We named its enemies which are, the world, the flesh and the devil. We also looked at our tools for the fight, namely the armor of God. We are now going to finish our examination of the church militant by focusing on how we should wage this war. We know our enemy, we have the tools, now what? How do we use them? What is our strategy for this fight?

### The Strategy of Our Enemies

#### Our Nature & the Attraction of Sin

Our enemies try to attack us by making us do what comes natural. "Do what feel right." "If it feels so good it can't be bad." Our nature is evil, so if the enemy can get us to do what comes naturally, he has already won.

**Jer 13:23** Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.

**Romans 3:9-13** No one is righteous, no, not one; no one understands no one seeks for God.

**Isa 53:6** We all like sheep have gone astray; we have turned - every one - to his own way.

**Eph 2:3** [We] were, by nature, children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

Our enemies strategy is to get us to follow our impulses and do what comes naturally to us. So they will try to appeal to our fleshly desires. Sin usually has a certain attraction to it. If sin were presented in all its vile filthiness, we would not be attracted to it. But it tries to hide its true nature. Proverbs 5:3 says:

**Prov 5:3** For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is **smoother** than oil,

Further in chapter 23 verse 31 it says:

**Prov 23:31** Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down **smoothly**.

If the truth of the matter were presented in all its fullness, we would not likely go after it. By committing this adultery, your marriage will be broken, your children will not respect you few will trust you. This woman you are after will eventually hate you and you will be alone in this world. This is not the way to happiness, but the way to destruction. This wine is strong and smooth but if you indulge you will become sick and wake up in pain. You will drink away your job and lose the ability to really experience this life for you will always be in under the cloud of a drunken stupor. If you were granted insight into what your life would be by so indulging, you would not say "Yes, that is what I want my life to be." Yet all of that is hidden in the temptations that comes our way.

**Rom 16:18** For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by **smooth talk and flattery** they deceive the hearts of the naive.

False doctrine will come and destroy, but it will do so subtly. It will sound nice. It will sound pleasant. These teachers will look like sheep but they are ravenous wolves.

## Our Strategy

### Use Our Mind as the Watchman

Kris Lundgaard in his book "The Enemy Within" describes the mind as the watchman. When an army was going to attack a walled city, surprise was the best option. If you could take out or avoid the watchman so that the army could sneak into the city, then massive damage could be inflicted. But if the watchman see them coming, he can sound the alarm and people can man the walls, shore-up the weak points, undo grappling hooks, reinforce the gate - in short the city will be very hard to take if it has advanced warning.

The mind functions in the same way as the watchman. If it is aware of an attack, there is a lot it can do to repel that attack. But our enemies will not give an attack straight on. That is why we looked briefly at the allurements of sin. Our enemies want to avoid the mind. They don't want you to think about it. They don't want you to reason through it. They want you to react to your feelings and so avoid the watchman of your mind. But listen to the admonition of scripture:

**Luke 21:36** But **stay awake** at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

**1 Thess 5:6** So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us **keep awake** and be sober.

Acts 20:31 Therefore **be alert**, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.

**Eph 6:18** praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end **keep alert** with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

**Matt 26:41** **Watch** and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

**Mark 8:15** And he cautioned them, saying, “**Watch out; beware** of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”

We need to stay awake! We need to fight! We need to stand guard! Now listen to this:

**Rom 16:17** I appeal to you, brothers, to **watch out** for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

**Gal 5:15** But if you bite and devour one another, **watch out** that you are not consumed by one another.

**Gal 6:1** Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. **Keep watch** on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

As we are arguing and fighting and restoring, we need to watch out. Our mind needs to be watching. Don't just let life happen and react to things as they come up. That is not watching. The watchman cannot prop his feet up and choose to react to whatever threat may come. He needs to be actively scanning the horizon for suspicious movement. We must have a plan for when we do spot an enemy. We have to keep our minds active. Our watchman must not fall asleep.

**Matt 16:23** But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your **mind** on the things of God, but on the things of man.

**1 Cor 14:15, 19** I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my **mind** also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my **mind** also.

Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

**Rom 12:2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your **mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Our mind must constantly be on the lookout for sin and it must have a battle plan when it sees it coming. Allow me to illustrate with my own life for a moment. I like to make the most of my time. So one way I do that is by listening to sermons or lectures while I am driving or doing mindless work like vacuuming. It seemed to me that whenever I started listening on my earphones at home, the kids would interrupt. This happened frequently enough that it became a real irritation for me. I found myself getting angry and snappy while trying to listen to a sermon so that I could be more godly. It wasn't until I stopped to think about it that it occurred to me that perhaps that is a weak area of my life where I should not leave myself open to temptation. So I stopped listening to my mp3 player. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off. If my mp3 player causes me to sin, stop listening. I still listen, by the way, but in contexts that don't have the same kind of temptations for me.

Engage your mind and think about what your sin is. Think about why you struggle with it. Think about where you are strong and where you are weak. Take steps, concrete steps to actually shore up those weak spots. As for accountability. It is not easy on one's pride, but it is far easier to deal with when someone else is there to help and support.

## **Be Specific**

When you see sin approaching, deal with it specifically. When you take your car into the mechanic and say "fix it" he is going to want to know what is wrong with it. It is terribly

unhelpful to say "I don't know, just fix it." Is there a noise you are hearing, is there a vibration that you feel, is there a strange smell? Does it not start? Will the wipers not turn off? What is wrong? When the enemy attacks, the watchman needs to be as specific as possible. "They are attacking from the northeast, they are about 3000 strong. They appear to have ladders so man the walls, they appear to have a battering ram so reinforce the gate." So also you need to be specific with your sin.

**Matthew 19:16-22** And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" 17 And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." 18 He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, 19 Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 20 The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" 21 Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." 22 When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Jesus forced this young man to see something very specific. To inherit eternal life he needed to first see that he was a sinner in need of a savior, and then repent and believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of his sins. So Jesus points the man to the law so that he will see his need. This rich man is not getting the point. So Jesus gets very specific. "Give all that you have to the poor and come follow me." Money is your god and you are placing it above me and are therefore violating the first commandment." Be as specific as possible in order to find and address the root of your sin.

## **Avoid Mere Duty**

Ritual and routine can be dangerous to this war. There is nothing routine about war. the enemy is not going to call to try to schedule himself into your routine. The enemy is not going to always show up at the same time with the same temptation such that you can simply do your duty in your normal routine and think that will suffice. You do not want your watchman to do what he does out of routine during wartime. You want him to constantly be on the alert. You want him to know the lay of the land and the shadows of the walls and trees so well that if anything is out of place he can spot it.

So also, out fight with sin needs to be active and not a passive routine.

## **The Mindset We are After**

All of this so far has been focused on how you, as individuals, fight the enemy. You all, as individuals, are part of the church militant and are therefore responsible to so battle sin. However, you all are part of a people. It is not just you and Jesus. It is you in a body of believers over whom Jesus is the head. We fight this war, not individually, but together.

I want us to have a wartime mentality. I desire us to have that kind of camaraderie that exists in foxholes. I want us to gather and to feel that as we pass through the doors, we are entering into

friendship. But more than friendship, I want it to be the kind of closeness that we can only have in war. We are in this battle together, and we depend on one another.

**Philippians 2:25** "I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need."

**Philemon 1:1-2** "Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,  
To Philemon our beloved fellow worker 2 and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house."

Paul referred to those who worked with him in ministry as his fellow soldiers. When we gather it is a time of refreshment for you or is it just what you do on Sundays? When you see people here on Sundays, are you excited to see them, to share with them, to weep with them and to rejoice with them - as soldiers? I am guessing the answer is no. Most of us don't know one another that well. Even if we know who each other are, who their parents are, who their kids are, where they live and where they work, we still probably have little access to the hidden parts of their lives where the battle rages, where the depression develops, where the struggles are most significant. That part of our lives we keep to ourselves. We need to strive toward that kind of authenticity. It will be a process, but that is part of the aim of this series on the church.

I want to close with an extended quote. This was given to me by someone after last week's service and it hit so nicely upon this subject that I felt it good to include it here. This is actually from a book, *Instruction a Child's Heart*, but the author, Ted Tripp, is here talking about the church. He says:

[E]ach seventh day, since God rested on that day from the work of creating he had done, we take our rest. On that day it is as though the battle were done. We stop, for a moment, from the unending struggle with our foe. We live, for a day, as though we were already victorious. Like victorious warriors returning from battle, we crowd into the hall of our king, we sit down to the feast he has prepared for us, and we look forward to the day when the battle will be done, when the final enemy will fall, when the rule of our king will be imposed on the whole created order, when Everlasting Night will be cast down forever, and Dread Chaos abolished. On that day the enemies of order will fall and never rise again. So in we come, like conquerors, and we join one another at the table, and rejoice in our victorious king, and take our rest. For a brief time we are not surrounded by enemies on all sides; the whole world does not strive against us, or seek to destroy our resolve. We are surrounded by our comrades, our brothers in arms, heroes in the battle. We exult to be together with such heroes, we know what dreadful foes they have faced, how sorely they were pressed, how they maintained their purposes, how they strove, how they trusted the puissance of their king in the darkest hours, how they overcame the enemy; how they strove for the glory of their lord, how they sought to conform the world to a pattern which would honor him.

They know, likewise, what terrors we have known in battle, how we have sorrowed, how we have grown weak. They have striven beside us against our enemy. When our hearts failed us they turned our eyes to the majestic standard of our savior. So together we come, brothers in arms, not now striving, but fellowshiping, and encouraging, and glorying together in our king.

On the first day of the week we return to the war. We are renewed, our armor is repaired, it is even made stronger. Our hearts, which might otherwise despair of so long a struggle, are made strong. Our wounds are bound up and healed. Out we go to war, for the glory of our

King, and we are not weary, we do not lose heart, we give no ground to the enemy; we advance; we look forward to the coming Sabbath, and we long for our eternal rest.<sup>1</sup>

May this be true with us.

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1. Tedd Tripp and Margy Tripp, *Instructing a Child's Heart* (Shepherd Pr, 2008) 142.