



BAND OF BROTHERS

COURAGE • HUMILITY • UNITY

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The Enemy

The World...

"And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process?" (Mark 8:36)

"The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the Good News, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life and the lure of wealth, so no crop is produced." (Matt. 13:22)

"The ones who win this battle against the world are the ones who believe that Jesus is the Son of God." (1 John 5:4-5)

The Flesh ...

"The old sinful nature [flesh] loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting, and your choices are never free from this conflict." (Gal. 5:17)

"[My sinful nature] is at war with my mind." (Rom. 7:23)

The Devil ...

"Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them." (2 Cor. 4:4)

"We are human, but we don't wage war with human plans and methods. We use God's mighty weapons, not mere worldly weapons, to knock down the Devil's strongholds." (2 Cor. 10:3-4)

"Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour." (1 Pet. 5:8)

"[Satan's] purpose is to steal and kill and destroy." (John 10:10)

"For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world." (Eph. 6:12)

"Together they will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will defeat them

because he is Lord over all lords and King over all kings, and his people are the called and chosen and faithful ones." (Rev. 17:14)

**"Don't be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your friends, your families, and your homes!"
(Nehemiah 4:14)**

Why the Battle? Why doesn't God end it now? Our powerful God could destroy the Enemy with a single thought. Jesus could return in His glory today and set the world straight and give us our glorious and restored bodies - and one day He will! But God allows Evil to remain and have dominion over those of this world. *Why?* Because God's *greater purpose* is to *transform us to become like his Son* so that we can enjoy the same Father-son relationship as Jesus- even if this takes some time. (see Rom. 8:29) God is ultimately patient with us, but right now He is wooing us and calling us out as men. So for now, there is a collision of the kingdom of light with the kingdom of darkness - a battle of Good vs. Evil.

Yet God will use even Evil for His purposes, for "*what was intended for evil God will use for good!*" (Gen. 50:20) We must always remember God's promise: If we "love God and have been called according to His purpose," then God causes "*everything* to work together for good." (Rom. 8:28) Does that mean God will use even our Enemy's hateful schemes for our good? Yes - *everything!* God allowed Satan to tempt Adam and Eve and for them to fall to their sinful natures; God did not stop Satan from seducing Judas to betray our King; God allowed Satan to destroy Job's family and fortune; God allowed a "messenger from Satan" to torment Paul and for Paul to greatly struggle with his own sinful nature; and God at times allows us to live in suffering and torment. *The reason? The larger story of our redemption, sanctification, and ultimate glorification is more important than destroying Evil at this time!* But a time is coming! God has a perfect plan over time to bring us into perfect relationship with Himself. Yes, there are times when we will feel discouraged and worn down by Evil's lying assaults and our failed attempts at overcoming our sinful nature. But the Enemy, with all of its hateful strategies, will not thwart God's plan. Just like we should not underestimate Satan's power of deception, we should not underestimate God's greater power to redeem. If we surrender to our King, He will never leave nor forsake us - in spite of our failures!

OUR ENEMIES:

The Flesh

The War against our Sinful Nature - The Bible teaches that, until heaven, we will be in a fight against our sinful nature (or flesh): "The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just the opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the

Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict." (Gal. 5:17) A military leader once commented, "We have met the enemy and he is us!" This also is true in this Great War! Satan and his demonic forces are not near as destructive to fulfilling our God-given purpose as our own evil choices. Satan is not our master! Lives dominated by sin will destroy the effectiveness of the Church. The Church must fight to win the battle against the sinful lifestyles of our men and our leadership. During these days, possibly the last days, many believe that the Church will embrace righteousness, but fires of purification will be painful. Our King desires that we become more like him - obedient and holy! We are not implying in this writing that we can be totally freed from all sin this side of heaven - we will need "the blood of the Lamb" on a daily basis. But we can be freed from a life *dominated* by sin as we become more like Christ.

"We have to recognize that sin is a fact of life, not just a shortcoming. Sin is blatant mutiny against God, and either sin or God must die in my life. The New Testament brings us right down to this one issue - if sin *rules* in me, God's life in me will be killed; if God *rules* in me, sin in me will be killed. There is nothing more fundamental than that.... It is the only explanation of why Jesus Christ came to earth, and it is the explanation of the grief and sorrow of life." *Oswald Chambers, My Utmost, June 23*

"What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Isn't it the whole army of evil desires at war within you?" (James 4:1)

"Temptation comes from the lure of our own evil desires. These evil desires lead to evil actions, and evil actions lead to death." (James 1:14-16)

"And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it." (1 Cor. 10:13)

"...because of the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 12:11)

"Don't let your hearts stray away toward her. Don't wander down her wayward path. For she has been the ruin of many; numerous men have been her victims.... Her bedroom is the den of death." (Pr. 7:24-27)

Rebellion against God. We may ask, "So what really is the harm of pornography, sexual impurity, flirting with women who are not my wife, alcoholism, drugs, uncontrolled anger, or the many other sins?" "I've tried to bite the bullet to get out of my addictions," one may lament, "but it's just too hard." So what's the harm? *The answer:* Sin separates us from a perfect and pure God. Sin blocks us from a relationship with God - which is our primary purpose. Sin is a statement against God that He is not enough. Sin is blatant

rebellion against our creator. Every time we sin, we are denying Him.

**Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire, they asked him again,
"Aren't you one of his disciples?"
"I am not," he said. (John 18:25)**

A sinful lifestyle prohibits us from living out the glorious life for which we were created - the call to be a disciple of Jesus Christ our King. So *the fight against our sinful nature is serious business. For the Bible teaches that lives dominated by the sinful nature "will not inherit the Kingdom of God."* (Gal. 6:21) That sounds scary, because all of us struggle with sin. But if we surrender to God and if we are committed to engaging in the battle against our sinful natures, then inheriting the Kingdom of God is certain! Why? Because God is for us, He loves us, and He will not abandon nor forsake His good intentions for us! For "God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished..." (Phil. 1:6)

But "biting the bullet" to get out of sinful addictions will never be enough motivation. A better motivation is to "become more like Christ - to be his disciple." Fulfilling God's heroic purpose for us is "the more" of life - the life of enjoying a Christ-like relationship with God the Father. We do not want to miss out on God's glorious plan for us! "*For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."* (Jer. 29:11)

"Freedom is not just the absence of bondage; it is the liberty to pursue all that we were created to be. Those who use their freedom to do evil, or to do nothing, will end up back in bondage. True liberty is not static, but it is the freedom to pursue our purpose unhindered."

Rick Joyner, *The Overcoming Life* (p. 139)

The Freedom of Christ. So "who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 7:24-25) Finding our true identity and purpose in Christ and living in the freedom for which we were created begins with *confession and repentance*. "For all have sinned and fall short of God's glorious standard." (Rom. 3:23) And "the wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23) But "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Rom. 10:9) And furthermore, you should "confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." (James 5:16) So there are two incredible promises that come through confession: salvation and healing.

"So now there is **no condemnation** for those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Jesus Christ from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses could not save us because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent

his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins." (Rom. 8:1-3) So "we are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us." (Rom. 3:25) To those who believe in Him and choose to follow Him, we have eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. So in spite of Satan's lies about God's plan - we know God's plan is good and merciful.

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!" (Psalm 106:1)

Yes, as sons of Adam all of us have betrayed our King, hidden in the darkness, and have been rebellious of his decrees. Yet through our confession and repentance, and by the power of *the blood of the Lamb*, God wants forgive us and raise us up in freedom as brothers of Christ. As followers of Christ our sins are forgiven, and *we cannot out-sin God's willingness and desire to forgive us*. But to truly "repent" means to turn away from a life dominated by sin - to instead surrender ourselves to a life dominated by the Holy Spirit. True repentance is revealed by changed actions. "Prove by the way you live that you have really turned from your sins and turned to God." (Luke 3:8)

If we truly are followers of Christ, we are being asked to no longer be dominated by our sinful natures but to follow our risen King through His Spirit - *to become more like Christ* - to become more holy. This process is called "sanctification." It is the lifetime journey where we are dominated more by the Spirit and less by our sinful natures. If we surrender to God - unconditionally - the ball is in His court to do whatever it takes to change us, refine us, cleanse us, and to make us more like Christ. That's right; after we surrender much of the pressure is off: God will orchestrate life's circumstances to change us, mold us, and redeem us! Of course this process of sanctification is often painful, but it is necessary in order to be a disciple of Christ and to live out the glorious purpose for which we were created. And sanctification is required in order to experience true freedom. So now you "have been called to live in freedom - not freedom to satisfy our old sinful natures, but freedom to serve one another in love!" (Gal. 5:13)

"Sin is a fundamental relationship - it is not wrong *doing*, but wrong *being* - it is deliberate and determined independence from God."

(Oswald, *My Utmost*, Oct. 7)

"God is determined to have His child as pure, clean, and white as driven snow, and as long as there is disobedience in any point of His teaching, He will allow His Spirit to use whatever process it may take to bring us to obedience."

(Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost*, June 30)

The fight against sin controlling our lives is an essential battle. The Bible teaches that we will never be free from this internal conflict. (Gal. 5:17) But because Christ abides with us, we can defeat sin's domination over us. "Sin

is no longer your master!" (Rom 6:14) But we will fail Him. So we need a Savior each and every day. But when "*we get knocked down, we get up again and keep going...*" (2 Cor. 4:8) When we fail we will get back up and head north again - towards our loving Father. If our heart's desire is to follow Christ, then His grace will abound. So now - as brothers of Christ - sinful addictions will be slayed, our true identities will be restored, and we will live our lives with courage and freedom because "*His Spirit is with us!*" So now we are being called to "fight the good fight" and to finish well in this life; to engage in the battle against sin's domination over our lives; and to live in freedom with *no condemnation* for the times we fail Him.

Summary: Some may lament, "I have accepted Christ and all that He stands for, but I just don't seem to be able to get out of my sinful addictions and lifestyle!" Is there hope? **ABSOLUTELY!** All we are asked to do is to totally surrender to God's will and to trust Him. Once again, when we surrender to God the ball is in His court. God will orchestrate our life circumstances to free us over time. It want be easy or always feel safe - but it will be good and glorious! Our hope is not in our ability to "pull it off" and "bite the bullet" through our own strength. Our hope is in God's relentless pursuit of us and in His transforming power!

So - right now - cry out to the Lord, "I surrender my all, no matter the cost!"

"I cannot, by direct moral effort, give myself new motives. After the first few steps in the Christian life, we realize that everything which really needs to be done in our souls can be done only by God." C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p.

165.

Satan

Satan has declared War on us. Some people, even some Christians, get frustrated and bothered by "the battle" language used by the *Band of Brothers'* ministry. Yet the Bible often uses battle language to describe our struggle. For example, the Bible teaches that Satan, "the god of this evil world," *declared war* against "all who keep God's commandments and confess they belong to Jesus." (Rev. 12:17) And God said to Satan after the fall of Adam and Eve that, "From now on you [Satan] and the woman will be enemies. Your offspring and her offspring will be enemies." (Gen. 3:15) We have an enemy whose "purpose is to kill and steal and destroy" us. (John 10:10) So as disciples of Christ, we are being attacked! "Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy." (1 Pet. 5:8) So we are warned to put on the armor of God, "For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms." (Eph.

6:12)

This life is not easy - and there is an obvious reason - we have an Enemy and we are in a War!

Standing Firm against Satan and His Demons. It is important to understand the strategies of the Enemy. Satan is referred to in the Bible as the "great accuser." (Rev. 12:11) The very name "Satan" in the old testament means "accuser." Satan is "a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44) His greatest weapon is to bombard us with lies and condemnation about how worthless we are and how hopeless are our circumstances. In other words, Satan constantly condemns us. His core strategy, similar to his assault on Adam and Eve, is to lie to us so that we will question God's good intentions towards us. Satan wants us to believe that God does not have our best interests at heart and that we need to take control of our lives and our well-being.

Satan will do everything he can to convince us that we have no special place or unique identity. God the Father revealed Jesus' glorious identity to the world when he pronounced, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" (Matt. 3:17) After this, Jesus went into the wilderness to face the accuser. Satan tried to plant a seed of doubt and he mocked Jesus' God-given identity by beginning his temptations with, "*If you are the Son of God...*" How did Jesus always respond? By rising up his "sword." He responded with the truth from "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Eph. 6:17) Jesus did not send warring angels to his rescue, which He had the power to do: "Don't you realize that I could ask my Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and he would send them instantly," Jesus proclaimed? "But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled ...?" (Matt. 26:53) So the most effective way to fight against the Accuser is to do what Jesus did - He wielded the power of the sword by speaking the truth from the Word.

Swinging our Swords. Satan will try to do the same with us - challenging our true identity and our glorious heritage as brothers of Christ. He will lie to us constantly. So how do we respond? With the truth from the Word of God - for "the truth will set us free." Whereas Satan's greatest weapon is lies and deception, our greatest weapon is the sword of truth from the Word of God. Yes, Satan will bombard our minds, but we can "stand firm" against "the accuser" by "fixing our thoughts on what is true, and honorable and right..." and "the God of peace will be with us." (Phil. 4:8-9) Because our mind is the great battleground in this War, we are instructed to "take *captive every thought*" and to bring each thought under submission to Christ. (2 Cor. 10:5 NIV) Of course this is "easier said than done!" As men, we are constantly confronted with images and temptations that arouse our flesh. We are fearful, tired, and thirsty. And we are tempted to seek worldly power and wealth. That is why it is essential to have other brothers in our foxholes that will fight with and for us with honesty, humility, truth, and grace. We were not meant to do

this alone! (see link to "Banding Together" below)

No reason to fear Satan. We now have the power of the Spirit in us: *"The One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."* (1 John 4:4 NIV) Therefore, we have the choice to stand strong against any temptation, condemnation, or discouraging thoughts that come our way. *"So humble yourselves before God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you."* (James 4:7) As Christ's disciples, Satan is not worthy of our fear or even our focus in this war! A great offensive against Satan is not our primary mission. We should not let Satan distract us from our primary mission which is to love God and love others. Remember, we have the Spirit of God in us - the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. For "God did not give us a Spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline." (2 Tim. 1:7) So followers of Christ need not fear Satan. In fact, the picture given to us in the book of Isaiah, after Satan is finally thrown into the fiery pit, is one of dismay as the veil is removed and we finally see our enemy face to face: "Everyone there will stare at [Satan] and ask, 'Can this be the one who shook the earth and the kingdoms of the world? Is this the one who destroyed the world and made it into a wilderness? Is this the king who demolished the world's greatest cities and had no mercy on his prisoners?'" (Isaiah 14:16-17) In other words, "You've got to be kidding?" "Why did we ever fear such an enemy when we had God on our side?"

Although there is no need to fear Satan, we must never underestimate his power of deception. We must stand firm against the accuser's lies, condemnation, discouragement, and temptations so that we are not taken out from our primary mission. And the best way to stand firm is to pick up our swords and speak the Biblical truths against Satan's fiery arrows of lies.

Satan has no power over death. Rest assured that Satan does not have the power over life and death! "For only as a human being could [Jesus] die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who *had* the power of death." (Heb. 2:14) But no more! We will not die until our time has come as determined by our Sovereign King. So there is no need to fear death, because as disciples of Christ, we will not die until our work for Him is finished. And we will not die until we have lived out the mission for which we were created! "...And they were not afraid to die."

"And the Saints overcame the accuser because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of their testimony. And they were not afraid to die." (Rev. 12:11)

The World

“Yet true religion with contentment is great wealth. After all, we didn’t bring anything with us when we came into the world, and we certainly cannot carry anything with us when we die. So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people craving money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.” 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Being distracted from our mission by the World. Last but not least, we are warned that the lure of power and money and the other pursuits of the world can distract us from living out the glorious mission for which we were created. This is especially true for men. For the good message "is crowded out by the cares of this life and the lure of wealth, so no crop is produced." (Matt. 13:22)

It is so easy for men to believe the lie that achieving worldly success and money will lead to contentment and peace. Many proclaim, "If I only had plenty of money, then I wouldn't have any real problems - The pressure would be off!" Why is it then, that the Bible warns us about the landmine of money more than any other issue that can take us out as warriors for Christ?

In one study several years ago, young stock brokers on Wall Street who earned around \$140,000 consumed on average 1 1/2 alcoholic drinks a day; they used marijuana, cocaine or heroin about 2 ½ times a week; they smoked around 30 cigarettes a day, and they had trouble sleeping. The brokers who made the most money struggled the most emotionally. Another study showed that people who came upon quick wealth in the Dotcom years were very likely to be clinically depressed and to feel like life had no meaning. We believe that money will solve our problems. The great disappointment and depression comes when money does not solve any of our real problems. Where is the peace that was supposed to follow riches? True peace never comes as a result of wealth. The Bible teaches this lesson over and over again. But this is one warning that we often refuse to take seriously.

“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” The Pharisees, who dearly loved their money, naturally scoffed at all this. Then he said to them, “You like to look good in public, but God knows your evil hearts. What this world honors is an abomination in the sight of God.”

Money is a moving target. It never feels like enough. And its claws won't let go. Of course money can be used for good. Wise men brought their wealth to the Christ child; Zacchaeus gave ½ of his wealth to the poor; wealthy women helped support Jesus and the band of disciples; and Paul lists "giving" as a spiritual gift. But too often we use the "lack of money" as an excuse to not engage in the battle for Christ. But God does not need our money; He desires

our hearts and our commitment to Him.

Money, per se, is not evil, but the Bible teaches that the "love of money" is the root of all kinds of evil. So when does money become the object of our affection - our idol - our God? How much time do we spend thinking of money or the pursuit of money? What relationships do we sacrifice in order to make more money? Do we place our security in how much money we have in our bank account? How hard is it to give money away? These and other questions are very important to ponder and to take honestly before our King.

How hard would it be for you to pray the following prayer?

"Dear God, if money is my "first thing" - my idol - then change the priorities in my heart to match your priorities - no matter the cost."

"Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give generously to those in need; always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of real life."

(1 Timothy 6:17-19)

"O God, I beg ... you to give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs. For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name." (Proverbs 30:7-9)

Summary

We will be Overcomers. The Bible teaches that one day Christ's disciples ("the Saints") will overcome and defeat the world, the flesh, and the devil ("Evil"). As we proclaim, like Peter, that Jesus Christ is the "Messiah, the Son of the living God," and as we are sanctified into brothers of Christ, we become part of a powerful church body, "and all the powers of hell will not conquer it." (Matt. 16:16-18) We will be overcomers because of our love for God and our love for others. If we surrender everything to God and follow Christ our King, "overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us." (Rom. 8: 37)

