

Wait! What? There is going to be Fighting?!

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There is an old Yiddish tale about a farmer who just wanted some peace and quiet so he could sleep at night. He lived alone, but, when he laid down to sleep at night, the house creaked and the windows rattled. He just couldn't sleep with all this racket. He had heard there was a wise old woman who lived up the hill, so, he went and asked her what to do. She asked if he had any chickens and he said: "Yes." She said; "When you go to sleep tonight bring a chicken into the house." He couldn't sleep that night because of the chicken. The next day he went back to see the old woman. She said to bring the chicken back in and a sheep. The night after that he was to bring in a cow, too. The night after that, he was told to add a horse. Finally fed up, figuring the old woman was just plain crazy, he put all the animals out of the house and went to bed. The house creaked and the windows rattled but he slept right through it and had the best night sleep ever. So, in the end, nothing changed from the original set of circumstances except the farmer.

Well, that may be all good and well, but at this point you may be wondering what this has to do with fighting. Don't worry, I'm going to get there, but let me first tell you another completely unrelated story.

Andrea Doering wrote about something that happened in her church. She loved to listen to church choirs. More specifically, She loved to listen to her church choir. Her husband was a part of the choir. Next to him sat an older gentleman who was not very steady on his feet. The older gentleman fought to stand when it was time to sing. However, on the other side of this gentleman was a friend of this couple. So those two younger men became bookends for the unsteady gentleman. Thus, whenever it came to sing, these three men had an orchestrated rise and decent. He fought to praise the Lord with his voice and his friends were there to help him.

Here is another unrelated story.

Pastor Wayne Cordeiro put out a video that goes over a time when he was in China training church leaders. If you don't know this, in China, all religious organizations must submit to government oversight. That government oversight will change what is taught to align with socialist principles. Thus, most churches in China are operating as illegal underground churches. This allows them to avoid the doctrines and precepts of faith being changed by government regulations. However, this then makes those religious activities illegal.

So, Pastor Wayne Cordeiro talks in the video about one of his trips to China. He would go there periodically to train leaders. This one time, they brought in 22 leaders from the Hunan Province. Those leaders rode a train for 13 hours to get to a hotel. They went up in the elevator two-by-two so they didn't draw attention to themselves. The room they came too wasn't but 700 square feet and had a hardwood floor. These 22 leaders sat on that hardwood floor. Now, it is important to understand that when you teach in China, you teach from 8 am till 5pm. So once Pastor Cordeiro arrived, one of the first things he asked them was; "If we get caught, what happens to me?" One of the leaders answered and said; "Oh you will be deported within 24 hours and we will get 3 years in prison." Pastor Cordeiro said:

“You’re kidding. How many of you have been to prison for your faith?” Of the 22 leaders, 18 raised their hands. He then asked them; “How many people do you oversee?” They took a minute and added them all up and answered; “A little over 20 million people.” Pastor Cordeiro, when telling this story said; “You see we forget that there is over 1.3 billion people in China.”

Well, he had 15 Bibles, so he passed them out. Obviously, 7 people didn’t get them. Pastor Cordeiro said; ‘Let’s go to 2nd Peter Chapter 1 and start reading. At that moment, one of the ladies passed her Bible to the person sitting next to her. Pastor Cordeiro though; “Hmmm.” Yet, soon after they started reading, he understood. She had the entire Chapter memorized and was reciting it. Later, when they were done and, on a break, Pastor Cordeiro went over to her and said; “You recited the whole chapter.” She replied; “Oh yes, I’ve memorized many chapters.” He replied; “Where did you memorize many chapters.” She said; “Oh, in Prison. You have much time in prison. So, he asked; “Didn’t they confiscate the Bible.” She said; “Oh yes, but people bring in scriptures on pieces of paper.” He then asked; “Well if they find the pieces of paper, don’t they confiscate those too.” She said; “Oh Yes. That is why you memorize them as quickly as possible. They can take away the pieces of paper but they can’t take what is hidden in your heart.”

Pastor Cordeiro, in talking more about the experience said; “Well after 3 days, you can’t help falling in love with these people. So, at the end, I went to tell them that I was going back to America and asked how I could pray for them.” One of the leaders said; “You can meet like this anytime you want. Will you pray that one day, we will be just like you?” Pastor Cordeiro looked at them and said; “I will not do that.” The leaders all looked back at him with incredulous eyes and said; “But Why?”. Pastor Wayne Cordeiro replied with a very profound reply. He said; “Because you rode a train for 13 hours to be here. In my country, if people have to drive more than an hour, people don’t often come. You sat on a wooden floor for 3 days. In my country, if people have to sit more than 40 minutes straight, they leave. You, not only sat on a hardwood floor for 3 days but you did it without air conditioning. In my country, if it isn’t padded pews and air conditioning, people don’t often come back. In my country, we have an average of 2 bibles per family and we don’t read any of them. You hardly have any bibles and you memorize scriptures from pieces of paper. I will not pray that you become like us. I will pray that we become like you.”

Here were three different stories and not one of them was without conflict. Not a single one was without a fight or someone having to fight to have something happen. The first story was a Yiddish tale about someone fighting to get some sleep. The second story was about an older gentleman who was fighting to be able to stay in the choir and praise God. The third story is about church leaders in China who fight to even be able to practice their faith. I could tell a million stories of fighting from true war stories with bloody conflict to a boxing match or all the way down to someone fighting to get ahead financially and everything in between. Yet, while I could go on and on, the bottom line is, as I think we already know, life is full of strife and fighting.

When we live a life of faith and follow Jesus, we are not left to face it all alone. In addition to going into battle with us, we are provided with the Armor of God. If we look a little closer as we go through each piece of armor, we are going to see a recurring theme.

The first piece that we are told to put on is that we are told to “fasten the belt of truth around your waist.” Well, if we compare this with another verse, John 14:6 says; “Jesus said to them; “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me.” So, since Jesus is the truth, and we see that the first piece of armor is the belt of truth, we are putting on Jesus. That is pretty neat but let’s keep going.

The second piece of armor we are told to put on in the “breastplate of righteousness.” If we compare that to 2 Corinthians 5:21; “We read; “For our sake he made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” So here we read that our righteousness comes from Jesus. Once again, then, we are putting on Jesus as our armor.

Moving to our next piece of armor, we are told; “...for your feet put on whatever makes you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.” We are told that Jesus is our peace in Ephesians 2:14 when it reads; “For He is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility” Thus the gospel of peace is the gospel of the one who brings us peace, our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we go further in the verses about the armor, we are told to “take the shield of faith.” Our faith is in Jesus Christ. We read in 1 John 5:10-12; “He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. He who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to His Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life.” These words confirm that our faith and our life are in Jesus Christ. We know that our faith is not measured by how much faith we have but it is measured by whom we put our faith in. We put our faith in Jesus.

The next piece of armor is the helmet of salvation. Acts 4:12 tells us; “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Salvation comes through Jesus Christ. Jesus is our helmet of salvation.

The last piece of armor we are told to take is; “...the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God. We know from John 1:1; “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; and the Word was God.” Jesus is the Word. Thus, Jesus is our sword.

Though out all of these pieces of armor, we are told to put on Jesus. For he is not only our King, our Savior, and our Redeemer, he is our armor against the fights. This makes the request to be in prayer and supplication at all times even clearer. Our Armor and our Savior are one in the same. We need to be in constant communication with the one leading the fight. For we must never forget these crucial words that precede the description of our armor, when verse 12 tells us; “For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places.” Thus, the answer to our original question is, Yes, Life is full of struggles and fighting that we must traverse through. The most important fights, we will need to have our Warrior Savior with us. He will be our protection, our armor, and our greatest ally. When He is with us, and we humbly seek Jesus for our protection, we can look forward to Joy in the Morning. If we don’t put on the armor though, if we don’t walk with Jesus, we are left to fight a fight we are sorely unqualified for. Yet, with Jesus by our side, we will never lose.

So today, after we leave this place, I challenge you to evaluate your own life. Are there pieces of armor you aren’t putting on? Are there fights that you aren’t allowing Jesus to fight by your side? If so, I ask you a question you can only answer for yourself; How may I yield to Christ more fully in my life so my Savior may lead the way?