

The Battle for the Mind

By: Jim Golden

Sometime in my youth I remember singing a song called “Onward Christian Soldiers” as Christians we were marching off to war with the Cross of Jesus going on before us into battle. My youthful impression was somewhat romantic concerning this war and very nebulous. I never quite knew exactly where the battlefield was or who the enemy was or what the rules of engagement were. As a result the battles were always indecisive and the war was never won.

Since my youth I served in the Marine Corps and learned the harsh realities of war. War changes people, people die or become disabled, there is always a battlefield and more often than not one opponent wins over the other. If Christian warfare were only as simple as worldly warfare we might be in different shape, especially in our personal wars. Not since the Crusades has the Christian soldier been so clear in their objectives. Their goal was to rescue Jerusalem from the “godless Muslims.” While I know that is a greatly simplified statement, in war it helps to have a goal in mind.

As a young pastor one of the first times I ever ministered to a group of men was on the subject of the battle for the mind. It was a day long seminar and another man I was supporting in this effort to teach these men about this battle was Larry Tomczak. (Larry has some very good literature as well as audio CDs on the subject.) One of the goals of this writing is to help us understand that the greatest battle we will ever wage is not on some foreign battlefield but in our thought life. No matter what your daily or recurring struggle is you can be sure of one thing victory is yours in Christ if you will just learn who your real enemy is and where the battle is fought.

In the Gospel of John chapter eight and verse 44 Jesus makes an interesting observation that is a key to everything I am writing about. Let’s look at the verse:

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The men Jesus was speaking about were Jews who were following him around. From outward appearances they seemed like followers of Jesus, but He knew what made them tick. Let’s take a closer look. First He says that their father was not Abraham, but the devil. Secondly He says that their desire to kill him wasn’t their desire, but Satan’s desire, inferring that they were mere puppets being used. He goes on to point out the devil’s M/O—lies! Lies are the native language of our enemy and he best uses them against us by whispering them in our ear using the “first-person” approach. Speaking to us in the first person allows him to go virtually

undetected. We begin to believe that his desires and thoughts are really our desires and thoughts just as the Jews of Jesus' day thought their desire to kill him was their own. He never says, "You want to do this, it is always I want to do this or that."

One thing that must become clear at the onset of this war is that our father is no longer the devil, but God. Now just like the Jews that Jesus addressed our desires are not necessarily our own, but the one whispering in our ears. It is imperative if we are to win this personal war that we begin to agree with God's assessment of who we are and not what we see in the mirror. Paul alludes to this very clearly in his letter to the Romans 12:2:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Paul is basically giving us a key strategy to winning the war. He has told us where the battlefield is and the plan of attack that will bring us victory. The word he uses for transformed literally means metamorphosis. It is like the process a caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly. He alludes to this in 2Cor. 5:17 when he says that if anyone be in Christ they are a new creature, literally a new species of being that never before existed.

Good stuff but let's get back to the battle. Name your recurring problem, pornography, over eating, selfishness, fear, cheating, gambling, fighting or a bad temper, maybe doubt or unbelief or paranoia. Identify your area and say to yourself, "My Father is God not the devil and He says in His Word that I am a new species of being that never before existed I am not just an old patched up human being. I am now a Heaven-being." That may be a mouthful but at least you're in the right war and on the battlefield fully armed and able to identify your enemy and defeat him.

Remember in your patience possess your souls. This is not a one time thing. You have established patterns and relationships with your enemy from years of doing things a certain way, or as Paul calls it "The Pattern of this world". Endurance is the key. Resist the enemy and he will flee from you. As in anything in life it is important to develop a habit if you want something in your life to change. It is no different in this Christian war. While God may bring instantaneous deliverance in an area of your life as he did with me and my physical addictions to drugs, the enemy is also patient and will come back speaking to you in the first person sometime down the road trying to get you into the old pattern. You may lose a few battles but you will win the war. Maturity is defined as having your senses trained to discern between good and evil. On the surface you might think the difference is obvious, but remember the devil is a liar and good at it. He tries to imitate you and God. Once you start agreeing with what God says about you instead of what the devil says or you see in the mirror then you can expect to see victory in your personal war.