

"WAR A GOOD WARFARE"

By Donald Townsley

Many members of the church do not seem to understand that God's children are in a continual struggle with the forces of the devil (Eph. 6:12; I Pet. 5:8). It is a battle and a war until the end of our lives upon this earth (2 Tim. 4: 6 - 8). Paul said, (when he knew his departure was at hand), *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"* (2 Tim. 4:7). Paul told the young preacher Timothy, *"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;"* (I Tim. 1:18). He said to him in the second letter, *"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier"* (2 Tim. 2: 3 - 4). To the Corinthians, Paul said, *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)"* (2 Cor. 10: 3 - 4). To the Ephesians, Paul said, *"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* (Eph. 6: 11 -12). It should be evident to any honest person that Christians, and gospel preachers, must war and fight against every form of sin and error in the world -- and every form of sin and error that creeps into the church! Jude said that we are to *" . . . earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"* (Jude 3). Jude is here telling Christians to strive with vigor against teachings that are contrary to sound doctrine (Titus 2:1).

From the above passages, it is evident that our war against sin and false doctrines is to be a "total war". As any good general will tell you, "total war" is the only way to win a war! To fight a "total war" will make bitter enemies (many times) of those whose error must be exposed. Paul had to expose the false doctrine of the Judaizers of his day, and he made enemies. He said, in Galatians 4:16, *"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"* ; so Christians, and gospel preachers, will make enemies today as they war against sin and error. (If I must have enemies, these are the kind I would rather have!).

General "Cump" Sherman made his name "anathema" in the south in 1864 because he believed in "total war" and that the war could only be won by "total war". He believed that the confederacy was an arch enemy that had to be brought to its knees as rapidly as possible, so in his "march to the sea" he struck the cities, the fields, and the facilities of the south, thus breaking the will of the people to resist. This was the most brutal part of the Civil war, but General Sherman knew "total war" was the only way to win -- and it was by that means that he won. History also bears out that Sherman who was so terrible in war was a compassionate man in victory. He was so generous in his first surrender terms to Johnston that Washington made him re-negotiate.

Christians ought to fight a "total war" against false doctrine and sin, but be very compassionate to souls who are involved and caught in error. We are to hate their error, but love their souls. This is what the whole war is about -- the saving of souls from sin and error (I Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 2: 24 - 26).

Today we are committed to "total war" against apostasy and digression in the church; sin and false doctrine outside the church. I, as a gospel preacher, am committed to fight digression with all the vigor of my being as long as breath is in my body and the strength of reason is in my mind! I have no intention of letting the enemies of truth and the compromisers with error have any advantage -- no, not for one hour (Gal. 2:5), because precious souls and the truth of the gospel are at stake! Paul fought his entire life -- as a Christian, as a preacher, and as an apostle -- warning of error on every hand (I Cor. 15:32; Phil. 3:2; Acts 20: 29 - 31)! How can I do any differently and be faithful to my responsibility as a preacher of the gospel? I cannot!!!