

"A Good Fight"
Sunday, May 31, 2009
By Pastor Peter F. Paine

As Christians we have to fight a good fight of faith. It's not uncommon to hear it from most pulpits in America on any given Sunday morning. But, we can't just decide that we want to look back on our life in our last day and say "I fought a good fight", or that we want those who loved us to look back on our life at our funeral and say, "they fought a good fight".

Fighting a good fight is a decision that must be made right now. There is no time to waste. Before stepping into a spiritual battle, we have to decide that we're going to fight, and fight well. We can't give up part way through. We can't throw in the towel when things get a little too tough. We have to stick it out. Sometimes we will have to do the right thing when we don't feel like it. We will have to get a Godly perspective on the battle before we go into it. We decide today how we will be remembered for the rest of time.

There is a popular song by Casting Crowns called *The Voice of Truth*.

Oh, what I would do to have
the kind of faith it takes
To climb out of this boat I'm in
Onto the crashing waves
To step out of my comfort zone
Into the realm of the unknown
Where Jesus is,
And he's holding out his hand

But the waves are calling out my name
and they laugh at me
Reminding me of all the times
I've tried before and failed
The waves they keep on telling me
time and time again
"Boy, you'll never win,
you'll never win."

But the voice of truth tells me a different story
the voice of truth says "do not be afraid!"
and the voice of truth says "this is for my glory"
Out of all the voices calling out to me
I will choose to listen and believe the voice of truth

Oh, what I would do
to have the kind of strength it takes
To stand before a giant
with just a sling and a stone
Surrounded by the sound
of a thousand warriors
shaking in their armor
Wishing they'd have had the strength to stand

But the giant's calling out
my name and he laughs at me
Reminding me of all the times
I've tried before and failed
The giant keeps on telling me
time and time again
"Boy you'll never win,
you'll never win."

But the voice of truth tells me a different story
the voice of truth says "do not be afraid!"
and the voice of truth says "this is for my glory"
Out of all the voices calling out to me
I will choose to listen and believe the voice of truth

But the stone was just the right size
to put the giant on the ground
and the waves they don't seem so high
from on top of them looking down
I will soar with the wings of eagles
when I stop and listen to the sound of Jesus
singing over me

But the voice of truth tells me a different story
The voice of truth says "do not be afraid"
And the voice of truth says "this is for my glory"
Out of all the voices calling out to me (calling out to me)
I will choose to listen and believe (I will choose to listen and
believe)
I will choose to listen and believe the voice of truth

I will listen and believe
I will listen and believe the voice of truth
I will listen and believe
'Cause Jesus you are the voice of truth
And I will listen to you.. oh you are

In the middle of a spiritual battle, there will be more than one voice. We may have the voice of self-doubt speak up. Maybe the voice of your past will speak up and remind you of failures. No matter what, we have to follow Jesus. We have to choose to listen to His voice as we go through our lives day to day. It may not always be easy, but that is part of choosing to fight a good fight.

It is easy to look back at the Bible (while we have the whole story in our hands) and think it must have somehow been easier for "them". But if we try for a minute to forget the endings of some great stories in the Bible, how frightened must those faithful men and women have been?

Right before Esther saved her people, she was in danger of being killed for going directly to the king when she hadn't been summoned. The three Hebrew Children were being taken into a furnace to be killed for not following the decree of the king right before the spirit of God was with them in the fire, saved them, and brought a nation to know the power of God. The tough moments right before a victory are the moments when we choose to fight a good fight. That is the moment when we define our faith. That is the moment when we dig in our heels and say, "No matter how grim this looks, a victory is right around the corner and I will not back down now".

Pastor Paine asked each of us to make a decision right now about how we will react when we're in that tight situation of not knowing the outcome. If we make up our minds right now, in the heat of a spiritual battle, we will do what we know we need to do. He pointed out that we can't go into battle wondering what the outcome will be. We have to go into battle knowing that "this is the day God will be victorious in my life".

Proverbs 3:5-7

5. Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
6. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

7. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

We can't depend on what we think is right. What seems right to us will not always be. God's way is not our way, and if we are going to win this fight, we have to yield to his way.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

God's expected destination for our life's journey is victory!

I Samuel chapter 17

In chapter 17 of 1 Samuel is the story of David and Goliath. David was a warrior deep down inside (never mind the fact that he was a shepherd for a living). He knew that he was made for battle and he would win once he got into one. In verses 34-36 we can see that David knew where he came from, and was thankful for even small victories in the big scheme of things. The small victories matter. We don't have to wait for the monumental, life changing events to thank God. He is good to us and gives us victory every day that we live for him.

I Samuel 17:34-36

34. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

35. And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered [it] out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught [him] by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

36. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

Pastor Paine challenged us with this question: "Am I so busy expecting failure that I would be surprised if God leads me to a victory?" We have to be careful what we are preparing our minds for. If we are preparing for defeat, we don't have even a slight chance for victory because when the chance arrives, we will be looking the other way. If we are preparing for victory, opportunities to succeed through Christ will come our way and we will take them every time!

Daniel chapter 3

In Daniel chapter 3 we read the story of the three Hebrew Children: Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego. What small victories must they have won before they were put in this situation where they had to put their lives on the line to obey God? We have to remember that God will choose the battles he puts us in. We don't make the decision. All we have to do fight the fights we are faced with as well as we can, and allow God to work through us.

Nehemiah 8:10

Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for [this] day [is] holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

The joy we get from God is what will get us through in hard times.

James 1:2-4

2. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

3. Knowing [this], that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4. But let patience have [her] perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Fighting a good fight of faith is not supposed to be easy. That's why it's called a fight. There will be times when we want to throw in the towel and walk away, but we have to decide long before that moment that we want the victory. We are designed to be victorious. That is the destination God created for us on this journey!