

Fighting the Noble War

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[0:00] Well, fellas, we're going to continue our look at the book of 1 Timothy, lesson 6.

! We're already to verse 18 in chapter 1. Pretty amazing.! Going to cover a verse and a half tonight. I apologize for the speed, but just hold on and we'll get through it.

Let me say to you that there are two sides to the Christian life that the Lord Jesus has called us to live. On the one hand, the Lord grants to His followers an abundant life.

It is a life that is to be filled with love, with peace, with joy. We are to live in constant communication with the Lord.

We tend to stress such a lifestyle in various witnessing programs and tracts. But there's another side to the Christian life we may not talk much about.

[1:21] Maybe we should. And it is a life of warfare waged against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We are in a battle with eternal consequences. We are at war and warring against world systems and Satan who controls world systems.

And we also battle our own unredeemed sinful flesh. And I hope the battle in that regard is not as intense for you guys as it often seems for me.

The church in the 21st century has all but forgotten that we are engaged in a deadly battle for the souls of men.

We live instead at a time of easy believism. We live in a time of cheap grace. John MacArthur says grace seems to be losing its value as time goes by.

[2:31] The church today has an inadequate understanding of spiritual warfare and the struggles involved in loving and serving the Lord Jesus Christ in a Christ-hating world.

In a Christ-hating world. Often in our time, it seems that many churches in our nation and around the world tend to focus or magnify things that don't really matter.

Things that don't have eternal consequence. We get offended even in church. You know, someone forgets to greet us. And I've seen that happen at Highland Park.

We forget to greet somebody on Sunday morning or the preacher preaches too long. My personal view is with what we're learning from Dr. Luke, keep going.

We'll cater in food. Just keep going. I don't want to leave. As one minister has said, we are in a raging battle.

[3:42] And it is absurd for the soldiers in that campaign to complain about a speck of dust on their uniform. You know, that's major on majors and not on minors.

And everything's minor except the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, of all the writers of the New Testament, the Apostle Paul was keenly aware of the warfare that was going on around them.

And we know he battled the flesh. You can read that in Romans, particularly 6 and 7. He battled the flesh. He battled the world around him. He battled Satan.

He battled Satan's demons. He did battle with a messenger that Satan sent specifically to assault him.

He battled a thorn in the flesh, whatever that was. Paul knew about warfare. And in our lesson today, Paul is going to remind Timothy of the battle that rages all around on every front.

[4:59] And he's going to call Timothy to engage in a noble fight against Satan and his demons. And let me just remind you guys, when he's calling Timothy to do that, he's calling us to do that.

The Spirit of God controlling Paul is writing this not just to the church of the first century, but to the church of the 21st century. So it is our call as well.

And like all of those engaged in Christian service, Paul urges Timothy to engage in unceasing spiritual warfare.

Now, in order to fight that fight, Timothy is going to need equipment. He's got to be equipped. War demands equipment.

It demands training and devotion to duty. It is Paul's intention to provide all of this to his spiritual son.

[6:06] Through the power of the Holy Spirit, who, by the way, preserved this writing for us, he will also equip us for battle. We are to be equipped for battle.

Now, you may recall from a previous study that Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus to oppose the enemies that were infecting the church there.

And there was a cancer in that church. False leaders had taken positions of power and authority in the church and were doing much harm to the cause of Christ.

They were teaching heresy about the person of Christ, about his work. And at the same time, these false teachers were living lives that were impure.

Same truth with false teachers today. Paul had positioned Timothy on the front line. He's on the front line of the battle.

[7:08] And Paul wants his son in the faith to acquit himself well. When we speak in terms of spiritual conflict, we need to really have a big picture of that.

We need the big picture. Is there anyone here old enough? Oscar, you are. To remember, right after World War II, there was a program that came on Saturdays called The Big Picture.

And it was about battles in World War II. Do you remember that? That was a great show. It's disappeared. It's totally gone. That was a great show. It showed tactics and strategy and had maps and who attacked.

I love that. Paul wants us to look at the big picture. Ultimately, spiritual conflict is waged at the highest possible level in the universe.

That's where it's being waged. It is a battle between God and Satan. It is also fought on an angelic level, pitting God's elect holy angels against Satan's demons.

[8:17] That war is going on at the same time. And on the human level, it is usually waged between godly men and ungodly men. And this battle is all won.

It's all joined. Now, there was a time in the very distant past, we don't know how long ago, when warfare of any kind did not exist.

In fact, when God finished creation on the sixth day, God saw that all he had made, and behold, it was very good.

Genesis 131. It was very good. Everything in the universe was in submission to God's holy and sovereign rule.

And then there was a woman. No, no, no. I just threw that in. I just threw that in. No, no. That's for Don to preach on Sunday mornings.

[9:21] If my wife knew that, she'd be so mad. There was no conflict and there was no rebellion. There wasn't even the thought of such a thing.

This was a time when there was no Satan by that name, no adversary, no rebellion, and no deceiver. Boy, I kind of like to go back to that time.

I think that's where we're headed. Then an event occurred that ignited. Sorry for the scratching, but you can do that on Monday nights. It's Sunday mornings. It's real difficult.

Then an event occurred that ignites a war of cosmic proportions. And Ezekiel wrote about it. And it's a little wordy, but it's worth the read.

And Jonathan, I don't know where I got this, but it's in Ezekiel. Again, the word of the Lord came to me saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, Thus says the Lord God, You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

[10:38] You were in Eden. Now, I'm going to point out to you just a minute. He's no longer talking about the earthly king of Tyre. He's the force behind the king of Tyre. You were in Eden, the garden of God.

Every precious stone was your covering, the ruby, the topaz, and the diamond, the barrel, the onyx, and the jasper, the lapis lazuli, if I said that right, the turquoise and the emerald, the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets was in you.

On the day that you were created, very important term there, they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers.

And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God. You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until, now we've got to transition, unrighteousness was found in you.

By the abundance of your trade, you were internally filled with violence and you sinned. Therefore, I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God, and I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

[12 : 11] Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground. I put you before kings that they may see you, but by the multitude of your iniquities and the unrighteousness of your trade, you profaned the sanctuaries.

Therefore, I have brought fire from the midst of you. It has consumed you, and I turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you.

You have become terrified, and you will cease to be forever. Now, Ezekiel had been talking about the evil rulers of Tyre, but he focuses more on the power behind such evil by revealing a supernatural being by the name of Lucifer.

He's talking there about Lucifer. He was the anointed cherub who covers. He was the highest ranking, and here's that important word again, created being in the universe.

Now, remember, Christ was not created. He is co-equal, co-eternal with the Father and with the Spirit. But Lucifer was the highest ranking created being in the universe.

[13 : 41] Lucifer became mesmerized by the glory of God, mesmerized by it. He dwelt on the holy mountain of God.

He walked in the midst of the stones of fire. This speaks of his dwelling in the very presence of the Trinity. He lives in the presence of the Trinity.

How such a being could fall into gross sin and immorality remains a mystery. But he did. He fell. Ezekiel said that unrighteousness was found in him. It's in the very throne room of God. And yet unrighteousness was found in him.

As a result of his rebellion, Lucifer was cast out of heaven and cast down to the earth. He underwent a name change.

[14 : 41] He became known as Satan. That means, by the way, adversary. He was also known as Apollyon, the destroyer.

He was known as Devil, the slanderer. Now, we don't know all of the details concerning his fall from the presence of God.

But Ezekiel says that his heart became filled with the knowledge of his own beauty. That sounds rather prideful, doesn't it?

His heart was filled with the knowledge of his own beauty. And his wisdom was corrupted by his own splendor.

Boy, those are two damning evidences against him. He obviously became enamored with his own beauty and with his own splendor, which created in him the sin of pride, and that led to rebellion.

[15 : 50] He rebelled in the throne room of God, in the midst of the Trinity. Isaiah confirms that pride led to the downfall of Satan.

In the 14th chapter, verse 12 and following, How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, sun of the dawn.

You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations. But you said in your heart, and listen to these wills.

I will ascend to heaven. I will raise my throne above the stars of God. And I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the most high God.

[16 : 54] Wow. That's the highest created being in the universe. Ezekiel described Satan as the power behind the king of Tyre.

Isaiah described Satan as the power behind the king of Babylon. Kind of interesting. These places are in the news today. Lucifer had a measure of glory because God refers to him as the star of the morning.

He calls him the star of the morning. And then Isaiah exclaims, How you have fallen from heaven. He's in heaven.

He's with the triune God. Jesus in Luke chapter 10 says, I watched Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

And he fell where? He fell to the earth. We get a feel for how far Lucifer had fallen because he made those five statements that begin with the words, I will.

[18:08] I will. And actually there is a progression there if you picked up on it. And if you didn't, don't panic because I'm going to tell you what it is. Lucifer was not content, obviously, to remain the highest ranking created being in the universe.

I mean, he wanted something more. Well, where do you go from there? You know, he became jealous of God. Then his next step, he wanted to be equal with God.

And the final step was when he wanted to be higher than God. And when that happened, the war was joined. The war was joined.

Have any Mormons in here or former Mormons? Any of you guys? They teach, of course, that Lucifer and Jesus were brothers. And they had a cosmic war between them.

And God had to choose which one he would designate his son. And he told Jesus. And that's why Lucifer became Satan. That's Mormon theology. When Satan said that he would be higher than the Trinity, higher than the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the war was really joined.

[19:31] And Satan didn't fall alone. Others fell with him. He was not alone. Listen to John in Revelation. Chapter 12.

Then another sign appeared in heaven. And behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems, seven crowns.

And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth so that when she gave birth, he might devour her child.

Very interesting. Revelation 12, 3 and 4. Very interesting. Well, the dragon is Satan. Another name for him. The stars of heaven symbolize angels.

And when Lucifer fell from heaven, he took with him one-third of the angelic host. That staggers me.

[20:47] I mean, do you ever just lay awake at night staring at the ceiling and you think of stuff and you can't get it out of your mind? That staggers me. One-third of the angelic host, and they're all created by God to be holy angels.

I don't know how many there are. Some have said maybe 200 million. I've heard as high as a billion. We don't know of fallen angels. But, and I don't know how long they were with God, but they're in a perfect environment, a perfect place.

They're worshiping the triune God. And one-third threw their lot in with Lucifer. Said, you know, this guy's going to make it.

He's going to be higher than the Most High God. And they threw their lot in with him. When Satan fell, these fallen angels fell as well.

That's why we call them fallen angels. And they are now known as demons, and they aid Satan in his warfare against God.

[21:52] Now, some demons are tonight permanently bound. They were permanently bound when they fell. Don't know where God is keeping them, but they are permanently bound.

Other angels are bound tonight, but they're going to be loosed for a period of time during the tribulation. And they're going to come out.

But there are untold millions and perhaps billions that move through our world unseen to do Satan's biddings.

And they are beings of evil. They're beings of evil. And Satan and his demonic hordes have always had a very specific target.

And that target shouldn't surprise you, but it might. Because you may be sitting saying, yeah, it's me. You know, they're always missing. That target is Christ. He wanted to destroy Christ.

[22:59] He wanted to destroy Christ. He wanted to destroy his redemptive work. He wanted to destroy the Lord's full and final glory. And in the 12th chapter of Revelation, we see a woman symbolizing Israel.

She gives birth to Jesus the Messiah. He is to rule the nations with a rod of iron. And the scriptures tell us that Satan attempts to devour the child.

And I think there's a double meaning here. He wants to destroy Israel, the nation of our Messiah's birth, and Mary. You know, he'd like to have devoured a child coming out of Mary's womb. And he

tried to do that.

He tried to do that. Satan tried to replace Christ on the throne in heaven. This is an historical timeline.

He tried to replace Christ on the throne of heaven. I will lift myself above God. He tried, and there's debate about this, but he tried to create an undeamable race by having angels have intercourse with earthly women.

[24 : 17] He tried to corrupt Israel repeatedly with pagans to destroy the messianic line. And Israel was always said to be willing.

You know, they'd marry into other cultures and whatever. He tried to destroy the Jewish race through Haman. Remember Haman? The Adolf Hitler of his day.

And then, and you'll remember this, he tried to destroy the young Jesus through Herod. Remember when he sent the soldiers, he said, kill every male child two years old and younger?

I think we can deduce from that that Messiah had been around for a couple years. But we always picture that as the baby in the manger and they barely get him out. But he wanted to kill, he wanted all the babies killed.

They had fled to Egypt. They were on the way to Egypt. He then tries to coax Jesus to jump off a cliff. He wanted to jump off a cliff.

[25 : 23] He tried to get Jesus to fall into various temptations. All that failing, he manipulated sinful men to crucify our Lord.

God and it's easy. We believe that God in his sovereignty put Jesus to death to atone for our sins to satisfy his righteous wrath against his people.

But at the same time, the men who willingly murdered Christ were responsible for their actions.

They wanted to murder him. God didn't make them do it. They wanted to. They crossed at a point in time, space in time.

When the greatest act by God and the most evil act by humans crossed at the same point of time. So he manipulates sinful men to crucify the Lord.

Before then he tried to keep him off the cross. He didn't want him to atone. Well, now he's gone to the cross. Let's go to my next plan. Satan says, keep Jesus in the womb, or in the tomb.

[26 : 28] Keep him in the tomb. But at the resurrection, the head of Satan was crushed just as predicted in the first messianic prophecy, Genesis 3.15.

He will bruise your heel, you will crush his head. And it hurts when you get your heel bruised, but it's fatal when you get your head crushed. This cosmic war also includes fallen angels, raging against God's holy angels.

Passage in Romans, it just staggers me when it says, and war broke out in heaven. That just staggers me. We don't really know what that is. There's no fatalities in the sense of death.

Like we would experience death in combat. That doesn't happen. But war broke out in heaven. On heaven's part, the war is led by Michael, the archangel.

Michael, and he is today the closest created being to God, Michael. The angelic war that is going on has ramifications that are past, present, and future.

[27 : 44] now, these battles are hidden from our view, but they go on around the clock. And can you imagine who was the prophet in the Old Testament and said, let my servant have spiritual eyes to see what's really going on around here.

And this gigantic war was going on. I remember Frank Peretti, you know, in his fictional book, I can't remember the name of it, but he wrote about this little village, what was it, present danger?

Present darkness. And the pastor in that town was praying for the town and praying for the church and these two horrible looking demons came in and he described them as monsters and they were going to, and these two angels came and just annihilated them and they said, wow, that's the smallest ones I've seen.

You know, they had no trouble annihilating these guys. So, the battle goes on, but it is essentially hidden from our view.

Satan, though, also attacks the people of God. We know there's going to be a future attack on Israel during the tribulation.

[28 : 57] Right now, Satan is attacking the church. And he's been pretty successful over the last century. Whole denominations have fallen.

We flirted with it. We flirted with it. And thank God for godly men that rose up. But he is attacking the church.

He does so himself. He does so through fallen demons and through evil men. Now, this for us is very important because as Satan attacks his church, he's attacking the Lord.

Remember when Paul was converted and Jesus spoke for him and said, why are you persecuting me? Was he persecuting Jesus? Paul should have answered him and said, I'm not persecuting you Lord, I'm persecuting the church.

When he persecutes the church, he persecutes Christ, the husband, the groom of the church. So how does Satan attack the church?

[30:01] first, he tries to keep people even within the walls of the church from grasping the true gospel.

And you know, if we had a little drill Sunday and gave out pieces of paper and said everybody write down the gospel, I got a feeling we get a hodgepodge. And you know, Satan's not one of these guys that wants to get people 180 degrees off.

If you can get off two degrees, we sent a satellite to Mars and they were two centimeters off at the launch.

Well, it missed Mars by about 12 million miles. You know, by the time it, Satan just gets you off a little. He tries to keep people from grasping the true gospel.

He does that in multiple ways by employing ignorance of the truth. He will use false religion, pride, lust, and the list can go on and on.

[31:07] Satan also tries to cripple true believers to destroy their effectiveness and their credibility. You remember when he sifted Peter like wheat?

He ever felt sifted? Like you're being sifted? I mean, I have. And I've had to pause. That's when you go to the Lord. Satan also attacks marriage and the family.

Boy, the battle is joined there. And let's just be honest, guys. There are more divorces today in the church than there is in the secular world. The numbers are actually a little bit higher.

It's almost 50-50, but it's a little higher in the church. Families are being destroyed. I remember God used to be in this church and he was leaving his wife for his secretary and I counseled him and I counseled him.

And only a couple of you know who it is. And I finally asked him, I said, what about your faith in Christ?

[32:15] He'd been a teacher. He said, oh, my faith is strong. I'm just going to live with another woman. I'm divorcing my second wife.

I'm going to move in with her third wife. Millionaire. Had a stroke and has to be led around. Kind of interesting. He attacks marriage.

He attacks the family. Strong families and strong marriages make for strong churches.

Make a sign. Let's hang it up. Strong families and strong marriages make for strong churches. With these institutions under constant assault, the church is weakened.

Churches can become very weak. One need only look at the astronomical divorce rate within the church to see how effective the attack has been. How effective is the attack in heaven, on earth rather, in America.

[33:24] I'll tell you, Paul and I were talking about it at dinner. Had a marriage ceremony at the West Point Chapel this weekend, last weekend. Two graduates of West Point, military officers, got married.

Both men in the chapel at West Point. See how far you have fallen. Satan also attacks the church through launching an attack on the leadership.

Pray for your pastor. Pray for the staff. Pray for the elders and deacons. Pray for the Sunday school teachers. Pray for yourselves. He wants to destroy the leadership.

He knows that if the shepherds are destroyed, the flock will scatter. And how many shepherds have been destroyed that have scattered into liberalism and false religion and everything else.

I think of two great men that come to my mind. Spurgeon, who was put out during the downgrade. He held fiercely to inerrancy. And I can't remember and I've never really seen this officially, but the great Charles Spurgeon was finally voted out of his church like 2003 to 2004.

[34:41] I mean, it was an astronomical vote. The other probably name you're not familiar with is J. Gresham Mason, who was an Orthodox Presbyterian guy, great professor, author, and he was put

out of the Presbyterian church because he believed in inerrancy.

He believed in inerrancy. An attack on the shepherds, and when the shepherds are destroyed, the flock will scatter. But perhaps Satan's greatest attack through the ages and in our day on the church is through false religion.

False religion. Now, I've said this many times on Sunday morning. I'm sure I've said it in here, but religion, if you get a dictionary old enough, and I'm talking about Noah Webster, and it's been reprinted like 1812, you look up the word religion, and it says a return to bondage.

Religion is an invention of man. It started in a garden called fig leaf religion, and Cain continued it. False religion. Man's efforts to reach God, to come into the presence of God through human effort, fig leaf religion, religion always fails.

Christianity is not a religion. It is Christ and God reaching down to us, whereas religion tries to reach up to him and always fails.

[36 : 14] But his greatest attack, I think, may be through false religion. Constant menaces to the church are liberals who deny the word, cults, false religious systems, humanism, and we could go on and on.

Leaders of those movements can masquerade even as angels of light to appear appealing. VOM had a meeting in Kansas City last week, and they wouldn't tell me what seminary, I just said a large seminary in Kansas City, but it was a woman that was a member attending seminary, and she came up to a good friend of mine, Todd Nettleton, a VOM guy, great, great guy, great brother in Christ, and she said, I think you're a hate monger.

I said, really, what do you say? Well, you're speaking out about the atrocities of Muslims against Christians, but that turns people off of the Muslims.

Muslims, and he's going like, okay, do you believe that Christ is the way, the truth, and life, and no one can come to the Father but through him? Well, no, I don't believe that.

He said, well, we don't have anything to talk about, and walked off, and a guy came up to and said, don't worry about her, she's just a seminary student. And I'm going, I'm more worried now than I ever was. I'm more worried now than I ever was.

[37 : 48] Well, how does the church defend itself? Applying the Word of God. Guys, you go to the Word of God.

Let's be honest, that presupposes something, doesn't it? You're in the Word of God. And you know, I often wake, kind of come to my senses and realize I've spent a lot more time reading books about the Bible than about the Bible.

And that's wrong. That's, almost idol worship. We've got to be, 2014 is close. Let's just make a pledge right now. We're going to be in the Word, collectively, but also individually.

2 Corinthians chapter 10, beginning in verse 4. Paul's talking, through the Holy Spirit, for the weapons. Now, if you're going to go to war, if you're going to fight street crime, you've got to have something.

I've got a Glock on my hip and an AR-15 and a shotgun 50 feet of what? They're a good weapon. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

[39 : 13] we are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Wow, that is powerful. But listen to this. There's more. Again, we appeal to Paul. Ephesians, very famous, chapter 6.

We studied that in here. Therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you will be able to resist in the evil day.

Are we in an evil day, guys? And having done everything to stand firm. Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God with all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the spirit and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.

That is a mouthful. There's your weapons, there's your armor, offensive and defensive, to do battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

[41:07] The church of the Lord Jesus is at war. It is every bit as real, even more so, than any war you've ever heard of or fought in.

Without the weapons provided by God, we are most to be pitied. With them, we cannot lose.