

The Real War

by Kjell Olsen

The real war is the spiritual battle between good and evil, with Christians being at war against the devil and his powers, and Christ having already triumphed over the powers and principalities.

Duration: 52:12

Scripture: Daniel 7:21, Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 10:4, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 13:7

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Humility Before God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the life and beliefs of Charles Templeton, a prominent preacher who later became an atheist. Templeton wrote a book called 'Farewell to God, Why I'm Not a Christian' before his death. The speaker then transitions to the topic of war, stating that the wars happening in the world are minor compared to the 'real war.' The speaker references 1st Peter chapter 5, emphasizing the importance of humbling oneself before God and casting all cares upon Him. The sermon concludes with the reminder that Satan only has power if it is given to him, and that believers should not give him authority over their lives.

Transcript

Now today I'd like to speak on the subject of war. I would entitle it the real war. The wars that are going on in the world today are minor skirmishes, minor battles, compared to the real war.

Now we looked at it briefly last night with the youth, but you who were there last night, listen again, because we will expand upon it and perhaps collect those seeds of thoughts together, and maybe there's something that can blossom in your life because of it. Let's turn to 1 Peter chapter 5 and we read from verse 6 to 9. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Resist him steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Brethren, there is a war. There is a battle raging even right now and has been and will

continue until Christ wraps it all up.

I say that because sometimes Christians forget that they are at war. If you want to note some verses regarding just the war in general, don't turn to it but Daniel 7 verse 21 and Revelations 13 verse 7. Ephesians 6 for instance speaks about the war that is not between flesh and blood but against powers and principalities in the air. We are at war and we are not on the playing field.

In this past week, have you been on the playing field of life or have you been part of the war? In our text we have read there about the devil who, like a roaring lion, seeks whom he may eat and devour. I am going to get to just two or three points about battling in this war but before we get there, let's look at some misunderstandings about the war and just a few points to remember. This is important to consider and just forget about those next to you now.

Just listen to the word of God for you. Firstly, the end of the war is already foretold. In fact, in Colossians 2 verse 15 it says there that Christ has already triumphed over the powers and principalities.

Maybe you are saying to yourself, but why is life such a battle? We are getting there. Just listen to these introductory points about war. Firstly, we must understand the facts about this war.

Regarding Christ's triumph, Uncle Elo has been preaching in these past days up at Malalane some very important points that are about the strong man, which one finds, don't turn to it, but in Luke 11, maybe he will still get a chance to share it with us. Luke 11, verse 21, the strong man. The strong man being the devil who has taken control of homes.

The one who is described in Isaiah 14 as being an angel or a prince of shining light before and who is now the prince of darkness, Lucifer. But as Uncle Elo shared, Christ is the stronger man. He has wrestled with and defeated the strong man on Calvary.

And as it also describes there in Colossians 2 verse 15 and those verses around there, Christ took the whole list of laws against us which declared our guilt and that we are worthy of death and it was nailed with him to the tree. So Christ has routed, has defeated the strong man. And as the verse says in Luke 11, he has taken the booty or taken the spoils, the goods, and that is you and me.

Secondly, let's remember also regarding possible misconceptions about the war that is raging. And that is that demons are not running wild and out of control. This is of great importance to remember lest you live a life of fear and despondency and therefore of defeat because you say, well the demons, they have all this power even over me.

In 2 Peter 2 verse 4 it says that the disobedient angels are chained up for judgment. God holds them in check. God holds them in control.

Now I know you are asking, well how come then do I suffer from this or from that? We will get there. But remember, Christ has full control in heaven and on earth. And between heaven and earth, in the air, has full control and has set the boundaries where these demons may not go beyond in obedience to him.

Thirdly, let us remember that the final war as it predicts in Revelations, there is going to be the final war, the final meeting up of the battle lines between the powers of light and darkness. That final war's outcome is already predicted and in fact is just a mopping up operation. Christ has accomplished the victory on the cross.

When it comes to the final battle, Jesus will be simply collecting his enemies. He will be rounding them up. He will do the mopping up operations.

Jesus needs no special weapons to defeat the devil. For he has conquered him through death. And Colossians, back to that text that says he removed the weapons out of the hands of the powers and principalities.

Friend, are you living in some measure of anxiety and fear about what is happening and what may still happen? And your pulse rate is measured by the good or bad news that you hear? Keep your eyes fixed on this. Christ's battle, the final battle, the final end is coming, but the battle is already won. The war is won.

It's just the mopping up operation. Are you living in fear of the coming of the Antichrist and the mark of the beast and the power that he will have over the saints? In 2 Thessalonians it says that when Jesus appears, when the Antichrist, when the lawless one, is at his peak of power In 2 Thessalonians it says Jesus will destroy him with the breath of his mouth. Isn't that something to cure your fear and your fantasies that cause your fear to be so awful and so overwhelming? Jesus will not have to pull out a sword.

He will not have to round up millions of angels to get a coalition force to fight for him. He will do it all by himself because he is God. And what will he do? He will do what he always does.

He will just breathe. For he is the living one. And by the breath of his mouth he will destroy the lawless one.

Maybe you should be praying just now even. Lord, breathe upon me. But not in judgment, Lord.

But breathe your life into me and destroy the lawless one in my heart. The fourth thing to remember about this war is that Satan only has the power which you give him. If he is a defeated foe, which he is.

If he is a caged lion, which he is. Then only if you give him authority can he have authority over you. Satan's only powers are in these three domains, all interconnected.

He can entice, he can deceive and he can lie. But he cannot push you into sin. Write that down in your heart and mind.

Satan cannot push you into sin. So don't ever say again, the devil made me do it. No, his power is to entice, to deceive and to lie.

There are some marvelous zoos in Europe, some zoos where they have bear cages and you can look over a wall and look at these bears that wander around or lions in a similar type of cage. And it has happened through the years that some adventurous folks, well, dumb really, have ventured to go into the bear's cage and have jumped from the wall. At one place, the exact place where we as the Choir were in a zoo, I think it was in Switzerland, a man jumped into the bear cage and the bear made short work of him.

Some people don't even need to be enticed to sin. They throw themselves into the bear's cage or the lion's cage. They seek out the opportunities to sin.

They look for chances to be with the lion in his close proximity. So only if you venture into the devil's turf by committing yourself to him, submitting to him, bowing to him, getting close to him, only then do you give

power to Satan. So if you forget all the other points, remember this, if you have only a very short term memory, Satan can only deceive, entice and lie.

He cannot make you to sin. Now, in this battle, in this war, I just want to now point out two particular things, two areas where you need to be on your guard, as we've been told in verse 8 of Peter. Be sober, be vigilant.

Now, let's be sober and vigilant about two areas. The first one may sound strange for you, the battle for faith. The battle to have faith.

This will make more sense to you as I share with you one or two stories about it. And as we reflect on the importance of faith, it may sound like this is a sin which just cannot trouble Christians, those who go to church. And that is the thoughts of atheism, the thoughts that God is not there.

But let me tell you, it does. Even John Bunyan says in his autobiography about, I think it's something to do with abundant grace, but he says there that he struggled for years with thoughts that attacked him and assailed him, atheistic thoughts. The feeling that God is not there, or if he is, and that's agnostic thoughts, then he doesn't care, he's disassociated himself from my circumstances.

Now, I'm over halfway, well over halfway in this message. If you're starting to be drowsy, shake yourself a bit. Nudge the one next to you if he looks drowsy, or she.

And now let's really get into this last half. And I'm drawing towards the end already. Listen carefully now.

So let's just really pay attention to God's word. You're not listening to me, you and I want to hear what God has to say. I'm going to tell you a story, a true story, a tragic story of a man associated with Billy Graham.

In fact, two men, let me just refer to two men and then I'm going to concentrate on the one in particular. The one's name was Templeton and the other was Clifford, C-L-I-F-F-O-R-D, Clifford. Now, in the 1940s, when Billy Graham began to be well known and was on fire for the Lord, an even more popular preacher than Billy Graham was, he wasn't a doctor yet at the time, but his name was Charles Templeton.

And Templeton joined the Billy Graham team. He was the preacher with Billy Graham. He was from Toronto in Canada.

Originally, even before Templeton joined, he would attract 20,000, 30,000 people to come and listen to him, a dynamic preacher who just brought the message in such a simple, clear way to the people. Templeton and Graham formed the Youth for Christ organization and they were both, Templeton was a deputy president, in fact, of Youth for Christ. But let me just go off on a tangent for a moment.

Another colleague of Billy Graham and Templeton was a man called Clifford, Bronn Clifford. Bronn Clifford was a gifted young fireball evangelist. I'm just going to read a few notes.

Many believe that Clifford was the most gifted, powerful preacher to come up in the church for many centuries. People lined up for hours to hear him preach. On one particular occasion when Clifford went to Baylor University to preach, the organizers cut the ropes of the church bells lest they ring during the sermon and disturb the people.

He had the students sitting on the edges of their feet for two and a half hours as he preached. By the time Clifford was 25 years old, he had touched more lives, influenced more leaders, and had set more

attendance records than any other minister or clergyman in the history of America. He was tall, handsome, dashing, intelligent, and sophisticated.

Hollywood even tried to cast him in the role for the famous movie *The Robe*. He seemed to have everything. Graham, Templeton, and Clifford launched out at the starting block of preaching in 1945 like they were at the Olympic Games, running for gold.

But why haven't you heard of Chuck Templeton or of Clifford? By 1950, Clifford had turned aside to his own ways. He had lost his family, his ministry, and his health. Eventually, he lost his life because of his addiction to alcohol.

Financial irresponsibility left his wife and his two Down Syndrome children penniless. This once-famous preacher died of cirrhosis of the liver, direct result of his over-drinking, at the age of 35 in an unknown run-down hotel in a little town in Mexico. He died unwept, unhonored, and unsung.

Some of the pastors from that area in Texas got together enough money to buy a cheap coffin and he was buried in a beggar's grave. But now let me get to the second man who died recently, Dr. Chuck Templeton. By the early 50s, as they were preaching together, Billy Graham and Templeton, Templeton began to have doubts about the faith.

He began to ask, is it really the word of God? Is the Bible really reliable? He began to be sidetracked about evolution. He said, but surely we are evolved. Isn't there enough scientific proof to show us that? He had long discussions, hot discussions with Billy Graham.

But Templeton made the decision he's going to Princeton University, which at that time was liberal in its theology. He's going to Princeton to become a doctor of theology and philosophy. By the time Templeton had finished at university, he was an agnostic.

That means that he didn't believe that God was there or wasn't there. It didn't matter. At the same time, just by the way, approximately the same time, Billy Graham was at a camping site more to the west of America and it was at a certain place, at a certain rock, which he even remembers, that he bowed and said, Lord, I accept your word, the scriptures as your inspired word.

Those were early decisions of faith. Billy Graham and Templeton were already believers, but Billy Graham confirmed his faith in the Lord. And after that time, he has until today always said, the Bible says, it's his most famous statement.

Now let's fast forward the tape 50 years later. And remember, your life is perhaps in fast forward as well. Maybe you're getting right to the end of your tape.

Just in around about the year 2000, Templeton had started with Alzheimer's disease already. He was in his 80s. Two years before that, he had completed yet another book called *Farewell to God, Why I'm Not a Christian*.

Now, just shortly before his death, he was interviewed by *An Atheist Who Had Become a Christian*, and this is part of the interview. Let me read it to you. As the interviewer, Mr. Struble, and Templeton discussed together, Templeton again defended his rejection of God and the Bible.

Struble writes in his book, there was apparently no chink in the armor of this callous soul. But then Struble asked the old man, Templeton, about Christ. Struble writes that Templeton's body language softened.

Templeton said, among others, he said, Jesus was the greatest human being who ever lived. He was a moral genius. His ethical sense was unique.

His commitment led to his own death, to the detriment of the world. Struble quietly commented to Templeton, so it sounds like you really care about him. Templeton said, he's the most important thing in my life.

In fact, and he stammered, I adore him. Struble, the interviewer, was stunned and shocked as he listened. Templeton's voice began to crack, and then he said, I miss him.

And with that, the old man, Templeton, burst into tears. With his shaking shoulders, he wept bitterly. But then, as if hardening himself, he waved with his left arm and said, enough of that.

It was in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, he died not very long after the interview, and he died in the same condition, missing Jesus and having missed everything. He died an atheist. Why do I tell you such a long story? It's to show you the battle, the war, for faith.

There are some decisions which you may, like Templeton, make in the early stages of your life, and that decision will take you right through, even to your deathbed, and you will not be able to retract and turn back, so hardened may be your heart. You may have a good opinion about Jesus, and about the Bible, a good opinion, but at your heart, in the very seat of who you are, you deny the faith. And that crack will become ever wider the longer you allow it to develop.

You will continue experiencing the gap until it is an everlasting valley between you and heaven, and God. I urge you, if there is that crack developing, and you are in a struggle for faith itself, get back to God, get back to his word, deal with the sin that has caused you to get there. Reaffirm your faith in him.

Deal with that which is causing you to fall into that crack, which might result in 50 years more life, but it's a life of bitterness and missing Christ. I'd say there are two points regarding this war, and your involvement in it. I'd love to have commented on some of those points from Peter, but you go and study it yourself.

But just finally, let me end now with this point, which is the battle against besetting sin. After all that we've heard about Christ's victory in the war, why do you allow yourself to remain entangled in your besetting sin? In Hebrews 12 verse 2 it puts it this way, the sin which so easily entangles itself around you. Now in these final moments, and we're going to close and pray.

What besetting sin, what entangling sin is there that is raging battle against you every day? If you're really running the race of faith, you have to cast aside every weight and every besetting sin. The besetting sin, dear brethren, is that particular thing, and usually it's one thing, which crops up again and again, and your bias of nature and character, its tendency is towards that same thing all the time. Is it impatience and irritability and temper which is associated with it? Is it the lust of the heart, the craving, the appetite, where you try to satisfy the lust of the eyes and of the mind and try and satiate that appetite that rages within you? Is your besetting sin simply your tongue and its deceitfulness, its double talk? Dear friends, if you confess that sin as it is, you bring it into the light, you deal with it and you bring it to Christ and you lay it before Him.

Maybe you say, I've done it a thousand times and it's still there. Well, Hebrews 12 says in that verse, throw it off. You respond, easier said than done.

I've tried it as well. Like Mark Twain said, smoking is very easy to give up. I've done it a thousand times.

The only one who can cast off the besetting sin is the one who comes to Christ because he has won the war and then in obedience casts off his besetting sin. Casting off means violently, rudely, crudely throwing it away. And every time it raises its ugly head, you trample upon it in the name of Christ for He has that thing under His feet.

Have hope, dear struggling Christian. He has conquered that besetting sin. Yes, that very one you're thinking of now.

He has done that for you. Let's bow and pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you have conquered and you will rule till all enemies are under your feet.

You are the slain Lamb of God and all power is given to you. Even those powers, Lord, which have ruled over us are now in your hands for you have conquered. Lord, liberate us and set us free by the truth of your word.

Amen.

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