

IF WE ARE TO PREVAIL

Scripture often depicts God's people as warriors locked in deadly combat with a determined, aggressive enemy (Eph. 6:12). Today that battle pits those who are content to be New Testament Christians against those who are determined to gain dominance over them and make of them a human, denominational church, patterned after their own desires. If we are to survive this assault, if we are to prevail in this contest, there are things we must have and do:

* We must be willing to stand and do battle against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11). Cowards and shirkers never win battles.

* We must be well armed and equipped. Paul exhorts us to take up the whole or complete armor of God (Eph. 6:11-18). This armor is not material in nature. It is spiritual and comes only by faith, serious Bible study, service and prayer. In our battle against false teaching, we must know God's word, but we must know our enemies; what they are saying and doing. In addition, we must know how to respond to their teachings and strategy.

* We must be persistent and determined. Wars are not won in a day or a month. The struggle we are now engaged in began in the 1960s. It likely will be another twenty or thirty years before the end is determined. Those who can endure the rigors of conflict, who can endure the hardships, who do not grow weary of the strife will be victorious. Paul charged the saints at Corinth, to "be not weary in well-doing." (I Cor. 15:58). Sadly, we have many brethren who are like the summer soldiers of Colonial revolutionary days. After their three months of combat they walked off the field, leaving their comrades to face a strong and determined enemy alone.

* We must be willing to make the necessary sacrifices to win the victory. Warfare is a costly business to. To recruit, train, arm and sustain a victorious army demands sacrifice of a nation's citizens. The same is true in this spiritual conflict for the heart of the Lord's kingdom. Churches and individuals must be willing to invest time, interest and money to provide the needed munitions for victory. We must have timely tracts, books and journals. There must be lectureships and forms to fortify the faith of our people and expose the folly of the promoters of change. An army without adequate weapons and equipment is doomed to failure. Those who truly love the church must count the cost and pay the price (Luke 14:27-33).

* If we are to win we must give priority to Christ, his Word and his church, rather than to friends and family. Although family and friends are important, they cannot be allowed to interfere with our loyalty to the Master and his Cause. The coming years will be a time of testing for churches of Christ. Many will have to make difficult and painful choices when friends and loved ones mistakenly follow the sirens of change. Faith and conviction will empower the faithful disciple to stand alone with Christ if such must be. It is such faith that gives us the victory (I John 5:4).

When the sounds of battle are silenced and the smoke of war is settled, pray that you and your congregation will be standing by the Savior's aide, faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). Many any other option be unthinkable, even abhorrent to you. JHW