

Stand Firm

“and having done all stand....”

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Introduction:

The other night I was watching a serialisation of Paul Ham's book Kokoda. Having read the book I was interested to see the portrayal of this fantastic feat of bravery as men from both sides Japanese and Australian fought for their lives, no mercy shown, no quarter given without a fight, a battle literally to the death. The mainly inexperienced Aussies, fighting against the invasion of the enemy and fighting a rearguard battle as well. Stand fight, then retreat, stand fight and retreat against the numerically superior forces that were against them; not to mention battle hardened soldiers of the enemy. Hughes a former Australian Prime Minister during WW I said, as he denounced Australia's lack of preparedness, "We must wake up to the fact that we are fighting an enemy that is not afraid to die"

I was thinking about the fact of it being Anzac Day and how often we see military terms used in the word of God. It is not surprising when you consider the fact that our God is a God of war.

Ex.15: 3 *The LORD is a man of war; The LORD is His name.*

So if he is a God of war who is he having war with? I think that seems to be a reasonable enough question. As we read further into the book of Exodus we read...

Ex17:9-16 *And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner; for he said, "Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."*

Why is God having war with Amalek from generation to generation and why is He intent in bringing judgement to them? Amalek was a descendant of Esau. As such he was related to Israel and was opposing the purpose of God; just as Esau his forefather did before him. God will always be at war with those who oppose Him. Just as Israel had a purpose in God to fulfil so today the spiritual Israel, the spiritual seed of Abraham, the people of God, have a purpose to fulfil as well. Because of that purpose we are targets for the enemy, whether it be man or demon, both are against us, and the fight is for our lives, the fight is to death. Every one of us is in a battle against the advancement of the enemy. So what are we to do?

1. Stand:

Eph 6:13,14 *Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*

This very familiar passage comes from Paul's address to the Philippian church on spiritual warfare. We note that we need to be equipped for battle by taking the whole armour of God. The passage says that *having done all* then we need to stand. There is no retreat from the enemy. The idea of the word "stand" is that of preparation, readiness and formation for military combat. Three times in four verses we find the word "stand." On each occasion it refers to our taking a triumphant stand over the enemy as victor and verse 14 consolidates that thinking by resolutely standing on the ground of that victory. There is not even an inkling of an idea here that the Christian life is a last ditch, rear guard defensive action. The term is a military term, so this must be considered a military operation, all out war in which the believer is standing on the territory taken from the enemy which he is confronting head-on! Who can stand against the church when not even the gates of Hell can prevail against her attack...?

Matt. 16:18. *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

We are of necessity to put on the whole armour of God to be effective in the day of battle and to stand. You can't fight the battle without a sword anymore than the trooper can fight without a rifle. The whole armour of God is mandatory equipment. Only from a position of strength can we make an effective attack against the enemy. As Reinhardt Bonkke says...

"We have been called to plunder Hell in order to populate heaven"!

We know that what enables us to stand is the armour of God, so why stand? What causes us to stand?

2. We stand for liberty:

Every army fighting has a cause to be fighting for. There is no point going to war without knowing what you are fighting for. For the troops in PNG as badly equipped as many of them were they fought to the death to stop the Japanese advance on Australia. They were fighting for home and country; they were fighting for liberty... So must we...

Gal.5:1 *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

The people here in the church at Galatia were being tempted to return to past practices under the Law which would substitute their faith. Hence, Paul encourages them to remain free from the Laws that would bind them to their past religious activities and enslave them to unhelpful religious practises. We are in a battle with an enemy who wants to bring us into the bondage of past practices both sinful and un-sinful that are not beneficial to us. The enemy wants to enslave us through old habits as well as tempting us to sin. Sin ultimately brings death and destruction.

When we are saved Christ brings us into a liberty from past bondages that we need to stay free from. There is a constant battle that we need to fight. The enemy is always attacking one way or another so constant vigilance is required. No army sleeps when it is in battle without posting a guard to lookout.

1 Peter 5:8,9 *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.*

Expect to be attacked, be ready for the attack, stand your ground and keep your liberty.

3. Faith gives power to stand:

Romans 11:20a. *Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty...*

Paul is talking here about how Israel was passed over for God's blessing and how that blessing came instead upon the Gentiles as a result of their disobedience and sinfulness. He warns us that we too can lose that same blessing. So the encouragement and exhortation comes. If Israel can be cut off from the blessing then so can we. So we need to stand by faith! Paul's words to the Corinthian church ring out as he concludes his epistle...

1 Cor.16:13 *Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.*

We are to do the things that faith requires of us. It is all by faith. If we lose faith what do we have? We need to believe, i.e. have faith, that without faith it is impossible to please Him and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (**Heb.11:6**), He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world (**1 John 4:4**), that we overcome evil with good (**Rm12:21**), that if God be for us who can be against us (**Rm.8:31**), that we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (**Rm.8:37**), and that our Lord and Saviour will never leave us nor forsake us (**Heb.13:5**)...

Let's stand firm...

Questions

1. Why is God a man of war and what is He fighting?
2. What are the implications of the word "stand" in Eph.6:13,14?
3. What does it mean that the gates of hell will not stand against the church?
4. Why is liberty important to the Christian?
5. Why do you suppose the battle is so constant for the Christian?
6. Why is faith so important in the battle we fight daily?