

He Maketh Wars to Cease



David Wilkerson July 1, 1984

"He maketh wars to cease..." (Psalm 46:9).

What welcome news to the child of God shattered and torn by warfare in the soul: He maketh wars to cease. Blessed relief; the battle in my soul is His battle, and He alone can end it. My loving Father will not permit the flesh or the devil to bully me into defeat.

My war is clearly defined by James, who wrote:

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?... Ye fight and war..." (James 4:1,2).

Throughout the ages holy men of God have asked the same question, "Will the lust-war in me ever end while I am alive?" Is that not the same question being asked today by those who love the Lord wholly?

The answer of course is that the war must and will end, and it will inevitable be followed by the greatest peace ever known. But how does the war end, and who ends it? If it is my battle and my obligation to end it, God must show me how. If it is truly His battle, then He must end it in His time and way — and give me patience while the fighting goes on.

The Greek word used by James is "stratenomai" which suggests: A battle against carnal tendencies; a soldier at war. It is derived from "Stratia" which means: A host, an army encamped. Didn't David speak of hosts encamped against us?" Our lusts and carnal inclinations come against us as an army, an evil host determined to undermine us and keep us in turmoil in hopes of shipwrecking our faith.

If you study the Hebrew word for war used by David in Psalm 46:9, it becomes a cause of great rejoicing. It is "Milchamah" which means: To feed on, consume, devour, eat, overcome. It is derived from a root word that suggests food or bread for a beast.

What the word is actually saying to us here is simply marvelous: God is going to stop the enemy from consuming us, from devouring us. He will help rid us of that which eats at us. He will no longer permit lust to feed on us or overcome us. We will no longer be food for the beast nature. God will cause our lust-war to cease.

God's goal for us is peace and rest from all struggles

God's ultimate goal for all His children is abundant, full life. He never intended we go through life focused on our sins and failures. The good news of the gospel is that we serve a God of absolute love — a God of mercies who desires to bring His beloved ones into a place of ascendancy above all turmoil. But we cannot take our place, seated with Christ in the heavenlies, until we are fully identified with His death and resurrection.

There can be no breakthrough into ascension life without experiencing death at the Cross. The Holy Spirit has put

within us a knowledge that we can never truly live until we truly die. We seem to know we have a date with death, a destiny relating to the Cross of Christ.

Take a good look at where you are, with all the fears, the emptiness, the loneliness, the failures, and the compromisings with sin. Consider how little of the Lord's promised peace you really possess. You have come up far short of what you know an overcoming Christian should be. Yet you know God's Word speaks clearly of victory, of rest and peace, of freedom from sin's dominion. You have seen some who have broken through to that beautiful life of assurance and ascendancy over evil forces. How did they arrive at such victory? How will you break through?

The Holy Spirit must bring us to the Cross and make us face the reality of dying to the world and sin. The moment you begin to seek the Lord diligently and you are desiring to come under His Lordship in all things, you will be irresistibly drawn by the Spirit to the Cross. You will be wooed to the precipice of death. You will be brought to the end of yourself. You will come to that place, stripped, weakened, and with no more confidence in your flesh.

The final fling

I am convinced the Holy Spirit is bringing His church back to the glorious truths of identification with Christ in death, resurrection, and ascension. Too many have become legalistic, and we have too often substituted a program of sanctification by works rather than by identification with Christ's finished work on the Cross. I have often said the upper room must never overshadow the Cross. I believe the entire Charismatic movement is being brought back to the Cross and all it implies.

I can't speak for others, but I know God has had a terrible time getting me to face the Cross. Death is a frightening thing, especially if you cannot see the glory on the other side of it. We come to the Cross kicking and screaming, grabbing at every little comfort or earthly pleasure. We know the Cross is inevitable, so we take our last steps by indulging every sense, enjoying one last fling. It seems we are saying, "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow I die."

We want victory; we want the peace and joy of resurrection life — but we also want to get everything we can into one last fling. That fling may last quite a while, and one may fall quite deep into compromise. If the heart is not kept turned toward the Cross during this time, there is a risk of spinning out into lawlessness and despondency. It could then be a long road back.

In the natural, disease does its worst work in the body just prior to death; so it is in the spirit. You may be at your very worst just prior to dying with Christ. Hell will assail you with every device in its arsenal. You will face trials and temptations coming at you with hurricane force. You will wonder at times if you are lost, rather than headed for the Cross.

Harry Foster, a pious man of God, wrote, "There may descend upon you a kind of darkness, a kind of apathy; more than that, a despair, a heaviness, a sense of the unreality of things, and that becomes a great testing ground."

God does not wink at sin, but He is ever so patient with those who are on the threshold of crucifixion with Christ. How often lately I have experienced that marvelous patience of the Lord as I move closer and closer to the Cross. I know the only way to glorious victory is by way of a breakthrough at the Cross through crucifixion of self. Yet, the closer I get to being fully identified with His death, His Cross, the more failure I've seen in my life. It seems as though Satan himself heard me cry out in my soul, "Lord, I want a breakthrough." The furnace of affliction and temptation was heated several times hotter. And yes, I've failed the Lord in grievous Ways during these severe assaults. Yet all through it I have felt, as never before, the Lord's presence and the Spirit's wooing. He has quietly assured me of His everlasting love, in spite of any failures. He has assured me that He will take me all the way through — and that the enemy may assail me, but He cannot stop the inevitable. I am going to come, by way of revelation, to the full knowledge of what it means to be crucified with Christ, buried with Him, and raised in newness and power.

We cannot end our war — nor can we crucify ourselves

There are several scriptures that suggest we must mortify — put to death — crucify — our members on the earth. We are told to take up our cross and follow Christ. But this does not mean that we must do it in our own strength.

Suppose a surgeon discovered a lump on my neck that concerned him, and he said to me, "That needs to be

operated on immediately." He is not suggesting I do the operation — that's his work. Christ, our Great Physician, tells us we need to be mortified, crucified. But it would be fatal for us to perform such an operation on ourselves. As surely as "we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" — so are we crucified by faith.

Dr. Donald Barnhouse, in a message entitled "Heaven Now, " wrote, "A man may hang himself, drown himself, shoot himself, stab himself, throw himself down from a high place — but he cannot crucify himself. Nail one hand to the cross, and the other is free. Crucifixion must be done by someone else. And our crucifixion and death must be done to us by Christ."

Dr. Barnhouse had a unique experience of "Breaking through" while aboard ship crossing the Atlantic. He testified, "I remember so well the day I first went to heaven. I was on shipboard, travelling alone. I had set myself to read the book of Ephesians a hundred times on the Atlantic crossing. I had known it by heart since the days of my youth. I had my Testament in my hand, but was lying in my deck chair, pouring over its meaning. Suddenly I saw the great truth I have been expounding to you. My heart leaped in a joy that is totally inexpressible. I saw the whole new and living way, from myself all the way to the throne of God, with the Lord Jesus Christ seated there, desiring me to join Him. It was like looking at a castle through a long lane of trees. Fortunately I was almost alone on my section of the deck. I lifted my testament in a sharp gesture, as though it had been the hilt of the sword, which it really is, and with the whole of the Ephesian truth aflame before me, I shouted — in utter silence as far as human ears were concerned — 'Lord, I'm coming through!' I believe that shout roused all the forces of hell. I felt their angry, hateful stares. But I knew then that they were absolutely defeated. They had been overcome by the Lamb and were about to be overcome by the word of my testimony that I was completely joined to the risen, ascended Lord. Back, you slavering dogs of hell! Lie down in your kennels! Your fangs have been drawn for those who identify themselves with the ascended Lord. And I cried, 'Lord, I am not sufficient for these things; and if he brings out forces that are beyond my powers, deal Thou with them. Even Michael, the archangel, called Thee to deal directly with Satan. I must be nothing in myself, but everything in Christ,' and suddenly I saw, far below me (a passer-by would have said there was a passenger half-asleep, leaning over one knee) a ship, a tiny dot on a blue sea. And I knew that I was one of the specks on that ship; but I knew that henceforth that ship and that ocean and that world were for evermore unimportant. I was in the heavenlies, joined by faith to my Lord. He was nearer than when I had seen Him at the Cross. The eternal life which He gave me when I was saved was now realised to be the life of eternity which I was privileged to live in time. I was to spend the rest of my life seated in the heavenlies with Christ."

I agree with Barnhouse that Easter day was my resurrection day also and that when Christ died I died; when He was raised, I was raised.

How well he phrased it, "When Christ ascended into heaven by the power of the father, I was raised from earth to heaven with Him; when the Father enthroned His Son far above all, there was also a seat prepared there for the Bride. Then keep me not back from my rightful place! Make not of the Church an exiled Bride. Then keep me not back from my rightful place! Make not of the Church an exiled Bride! Hold me not at walls of partition which Christ has cast down. Stop me not at gates which Christ has unlocked. Stay not my steps at a sea which He turns to crystal before me. Forbid me not to enter within the veil, where my Bridegroom has gone before me. Christ has died: Christ has risen: Christ has gone on high: Christ has taken us with Him!

"Believe it! Accept the boldness which He gives, and enter into the holiest of all and take our rightful place. Heaven wants a triumphant Bride now! and while it does not yet appear what we shall be, yet even now we are far short of that which God wants us to be. Let us know be where we would be; let us now be what we should be. So many things which are not now, really could be, if we would take our seat upon the throne of heaven."

One of my favorite writers is C. H. Mackintosh. His view of the Cross has caused me to shout and rejoice on a number of occasions. I share with you a few portions of his exalted view of the Atonement.

"The Cross is the divine remedy for all the ruin, and by that Cross the believer is introduced into a place of divine and everlasting privilege. Christ has met all the need, answered all the demands, discharged all the responsibilities, and, having done so by His death upon the cross. He has become, in resurrection, the basis of all the believer's privileges. We have all in Christ, and we get Him, not because we have fulfilled our responsibilities, but because God loved us even when we had failed in every thing. We find ourselves, unconditionally, in a place of unspeakable privilege. We did not work ourselves into it; we did not weep ourselves into it; we did not pray ourselves into it; we did not fast ourselves into it. We were taken up from the depth of our ruin, from that deep, deep pit into which we had fallen, in consequence of having failed in all our responsibilities; we have been set down, by God's free grace, in a position of unspeakable blessedness and privilege, of which nothing can ever deprive us. Not all the powers of

hell and earth combined — not all the malice of Satan and his emissaries — not all the power of sin, death, and the grave, arrayed in their most terrific form, can ever rob the believer in Jesus of that place of privilege in which, through grace, he stands.

"We do not reach our place of privilege as the result of faithfulness in the place of responsibility. Quite the reverse. We have failed in every thing. 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God,' We deserved death; but we have received life. We deserved hell; but we have received heaven. We deserved eternal wrath; but we have received eternal favour. Grace has entered the scene, and it 'reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.'

"Oh, the profound mystery of the Cross! — the glorious mystery of redeeming love! I see God Himself taking all my sins — the black and terrible category — all my sins, as He knew and estimated them. I see Him laying them all upon the head of my blessed Substitute and dealing with Him about them. I see all the billows and waves of God's righteous wrath — His wrath against my sins — His wrath which should have consumed me, soul and body, in hell, throughout a dreary eternity; I see them rolling over the Man who stood in my stead, who represented me before God, who bore all that was due to me, with whom a holy God dealt as He should have dealt with me. I see inflexible justice, holiness, truth, and righteousness dealing with my sins and making a clear and eternal riddance of them. No one of them is suffered to pass! There is no connivance, no palliation, no slurring over, no indifference. This could not possibly be, once God himself took the matter in hand. His glory was at stake; His unsullied holiness, His eternal majesty, the lofty claims of His government.

"All these had to be provided for in such wise as to glorify Himself in view of angels, men, and devils. He might have sent me to hell — righteously, justly, sent me to hell — because of my sins. I deserved nothing else. My whole moral being, from its profoundest depths, owns this — must own it. I have not a word to say in excuse for a single sinful thought, to say nothing of a sin-stained life from first to last — yes, a life of deliberate, rebellious, high-handed sin.

"Others may reason as they please as to the injustice of an eternity of punishment for a life of sin — the utter want of proportion between a few years of wrong-doing and endless ages of torment in the lake of fire. They may reason, but I thoroughly believe, and unreservedly confess, that for a single sin against such a Being as the God whom I see at the Cross, I richly deserved everlasting punishment in the deep, dark, and dismal pit of hell.

"I am not writing as a theologian; if I were, it would be a very easy task indeed to bring an unanswerable array of Scripture evidence in proof of the solemn truth of eternal punishment. But no; I am writing as one who has been divinely taught the true desert of sin, and that desert, I calmly, deliberately, and solemnly declare, is and can be nothing less than eternal exclusion from the presence of God and the Lamb — eternal torment in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

"But — eternal hallelujahs to the God of all grace! Instead of sending us to hell because of our sins, He sent His Son to be the propitiation for those sins. And in the unfolding of the marvelous plan of redemption, we see a holy God dealing with the question of our sins, and executing judgment upon them in the Person of His well-beloved, eternal, and coequal Son, in order that the full flood-tide of His love might flow down into our hearts. 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 4:10).

Now, this must give peace to the conscience, if only it be received in the simplicity of faith. How is it possible for a person to believe that God has satisfied Himself as to his sins and not have peace? If God says to us, 'Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more,' what could we desire further as a basis of peace for our conscience? If God assures me that all my sins are blotted out as a thick cloud — that they are cast behind His back, forever gone from His sight — should I not have peace? If He shows me the Man who bore my sins on the Cross, now crowned at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, ought not my soul to enter into perfect rest as to the question of my sins? Most assuredly.

"Blessed forever be the God of all grace, it is not only remission of sins which is announced to us through the atoning death of Christ. This in itself would be a boon and a blessing of the very highest order; and, as we have seen, we enjoy it according to the largeness of the heart of God, and according to the value and efficacy of the death of Christ, as God estimates it. But besides the full and perfect remission of sins, we have also entire deliverance from the present power of sin.

"This is a grand point for every true lover of holiness. According to the glorious economy of grace, the same work

which secures the complete remission of sins has broken forever the power of sin. It is not only that the sins of the life are blotted out, but the sin of the nature is condemned. The believer is privileged to regard himself as dead to sin. He can sing, with a glad heart,

For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died,
And I have died in Thee
Thou 'rt risen, my bands are all untied,
And now Thou livest in me.
The Father's face of radiant grace"
Shines now in light on me."

Conclusion

It is impossible to understand what it means to be dead in Christ and raised with Him in power without a revelation from the Holy Spirit. But as surely as God Himself must end our wars, He must show us what it means to be crucified with Christ. Without that revelation, the reckoning of ourselves as dead in Christ is so many meaningless words. I rest on the advice of my deceased father. He summed it up like this: "Stay close to Jesus. You may never fully understand how it all works, but you will be in the full enjoyment of all He has provided by simply being near Him."

After the Word tells that it is God who makes wars to cease, there is added this: "Be still and know that I am God..." (Psalm 46:10).

The Hebrew word for "still" is "raphah" which means: Cease; let alone; become weak, feeble. It is from the root "rapha," which is: To mend and be made thoroughly whole by the hand of a physician.

How thoroughly consistent the Word of God is, God makes the wars to cease and, until He finishes His work, we are to cease our self-righteous efforts, leave it in His hands, admit our weaknesses and feebleness, and trust our future and restoration into the hands of Christ, our Great Physician.

A final word of comfort to those who are in turmoil of soul

To you — pastor, teacher, singer, church worker, loving believer: Is your inner conflict tearing you apart? You may be buffeted by Satan, but he cannot hurt or destroy you. Most likely, you are being stripped down in preparation for a glorious revelation of the Cross — so you can be made ready for greater service for God.

You are like Peter who was stripped of everything before going to Pentecost. See this great man of God wandering aimlessly over the Judean hills — at rock bottom. Here is a man of God who once walked on water, who helped feed multitudes miraculously; who visibly experienced the actual glory of God; who is a blessed, prominent, useful, Christ-loved servant. But he sinned grievously. He failed the Lord as few others did. Now he weeps and grieves, thinking he has lost his salvation and his ministry.

"What is wrong with me?" he must have asked himself over and over again. "Why did I have no power or strength when tempted? Why no moral reserves — no will to resist the enemy? Why did I have to be the one to fall? How could a man of God do such a horrendous thing to his Lord? How could I have preached to others when I have no power myself in a crisis?"

God did not cause Peter's failure, but great good came out of it. It was a part of the stripping of God's man — permitted to reveal what was rooted deeply in the inner man. Only failure could expose the pride and self-sufficiency. Failure broke Peter down and revealed to him his need of absolute dependence on his Lord for everything — including his purity and righteousness.

We must be stripped before we are crucified. We must come under the shadow of death before we experience death. It is in the shadow of the Cross, prior to our breakthrough to resurrection, that we endure our greatest temptation and failures.

Praise God! Like Peter, after our sifting at the hands of Satan, we will stand in our upper room and be endued with new power and strength.

Last week, after enduring months of intense suffering in my family, my son was in a head-on collision that totaled his car. I was called to the scene. All the way to that crash scene I cried out, "God, it's Satan again — trying to shipwreck my faith. But he cannot kill me or any of my children." When I arrived, my 20 year old son Greg came running to me, unscathed by it all. We wept and thanked God that once again He caused another war to cease.

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