

CALLED UNTO HOLINESS

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CHAPTER FOUR -

WRESTLERS FOR CHRIST

That wonderful Epistle to the Ephesians, in which we have the highest truth regarding the mutual relationship between CHRIST and the Christian, is divided very naturally and easily into three parts, and it follows the divine order:

The Wealth of the Christian.

The Walk of the Christian.

The Warfare of the Christian.

In the first three chapters we have a revelation of the riches of CHRIST, the riches of glory, the unsearchable riches of JESUS CHRIST. They are the possession of the one who is in Him: Then, beginning with verse 1, chapter 4, and on through to verse 9, chapter 6, we are given a revelation of the sevenfold walk of the Christian, who is to walk worthy of the high calling to which he has been called in CHRIST JESUS. It is in this part of the Epistle that we have the greatest of all commands in the New Testament for the Christian: "**Be filled with the Spirit**" - that experience of the Spirit-filled life, the greatest experience, the deepest experience that one can have this side of Heaven.

The Call To Warfare

One would almost think that that was 'the' place to stop, but GOD does not think so. In verse 10, chapter 6 there is the word "**Finally**," and that word "**finally**" indicates not only the close, but the climax of the truth of this Epistle. The Christian is not through yet. It is not enough for him to luxuriate in the life that is his as a child of GOD, and an heir of GOD. It is not enough for him just to walk with the Lord worthily and consistently.

The Christian has a task set before him, and that task is nothing short of warfare. When you enter into chapter 6 at verse 10 and go on to verse 12, you are immediately on the battlefield; and there is a real warfare being waged. Who is so prepared for the warfare as the one who has entered into the fullness of His inheritance in CHRIST, as the one who is walking worthily and consistently with GOD, who has indeed been filled with the HOLY SPIRIT? It is only such a one that GOD can trust to be a part of that great army under the Captain of the host, going forth

into this terrific spiritual warfare. So it is inevitable that this Epistle to the Ephesians should end on a battlefield.

This week in Keswick we have heard messages revealing to us so clearly what are the unsearchable riches of CHRIST.

I trust it means for every one of us that we have entered more fully and more perfectly into our inheritance in CHRIST JESUS, and that we shall go from this place infinitely richer in Him than when we came. I trust it means, too, that as we have heard these messages from GOD's Word pointing out to us what is the consistent, upright walk of the Christian, that we have begun to walk more worthily.

Then we came up to Thursday, to that day of climax in a way, when in one message after another, the message of the Spirit-filled life, a life lived in the power of the Spirit, was presented in each successive gathering. The day ended with that glorious meeting where there were many who, for the first time, took the fullness of the HOLY SPIRIT by faith, and others who had had that fullness, but had lost it - came again into that precious experience.

Did Keswick end on Thursday night? By no means. On Friday and again yesterday there were set before us the great spiritual battlefields of the world, and the farflung frontiers of the vast mission field. And we have just as big a battlefield here in the homeland; here also is a spiritual warfare going on. To whom will GOD look? To whom can He entrust this spiritual warfare? Is it not to us who have entered more fully into our wealth in CHRIST, who are going out to walk more worthy of Him?

Are we prepared tonight to hear His call for spiritual wrestlers, spiritual warriors, for the great conflict of today and tomorrow? We have been witnesses for Him; we have been workers together with Him; but there is something even beyond that.

A few years ago in China I was asked to take a Bible class for young men in the professions.

I never like to assume a task like that without entering into some new, deeper experience in my own life. I am afraid of giving to others from out of stale manna. I always want some fresh, new touch of GOD upon my own life.

So, as I took this Epistle to the Ephesians for that Bible teaching, I asked the Lord to give some new message to me, to make some new demands upon my own life. When I came to verse 12, chapter 6, the Lord gave it to me in that word "**wrestle.**" "**For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.**"

I said, Yes, that is a new call! I have been a witness; I have been a worker at home, and in the mission field, but never before have I had a call made to me to be a spiritual wrestler. Friends, I did not know then what it meant! I would have been cowardly had I known all that it meant to make the promise to GOD that I would be a spiritual wrestler. But I did promise, and I asked Him if He could trust me, that He would put me out in the front line, in the firing line, in the thickest of the fight. In these last few years He has let me know a little of what it means to be a

spiritual wrestler in a real spiritual warfare.

This then is the message that He has given to me to bring to you tonight; simply to be His voice, making the last call to the people in this Keswick Convention that you will not be satisfied with being merely a witness, with being even a worker; but that you will offer yourself to GOD to be a spiritual wrestler, a spiritual warrior, with all that may be involved in a real spiritual conflict, for the victory in your home, in your church, in your community, in your country, and in this world, in these last days before the Lord comes.

Our Foe

Let us turn, therefore, to chapter 6 and so learn about this spiritual warfare, and all that it means, from GOD's own Word. **"Finally, my brethren."** Paul does not say, "my fellow apostles," or "my fellow commanders." No, he says, **"My brethren."** Paul is saying there, "my fellow soldiers." No Christian is exempt from this warfare. God has no place for spiritual pacifists. He calls every saint to arms.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

The stage of the battle is set. We **"wrestle."** It is an intense struggle; it is a hand to hand combat. We **"wrestle... against"** - five times the word **"against"** is used. We have an out and out adversary; there is a fierce, aggressive, active, satanic opposition. Who in this tent has not felt it? Who of us has not met it in his own personal life, in his home, in his work?

But we are so apt to think that this conflict is with flesh and blood; that it is with some person in our home with whom we find it almost impossible to live, although it may be a blood relation; you dread to go back again to that person tomorrow; it is a comfort to be away from that person even for a short time. It may be some missionary is here who is glad to be on furlough because he is not living any longer with that person he has had to live with! The furlough means partly getting away from that person for a time. Let us be honest. We have considered that our wrestling was with flesh and blood; and we have been fighting against the human element; and that is why we are defeated, and we have not won out. But **"we wrestle not against flesh and blood,"** not against a human, visible foe, not against a foe that is our equal or one on the same plane with us. No, it is against a superhuman, invisible foe that we wrestle.

Satan - A Person

In this chapter there is revealed a distinct alignment between GOD and His hosts, and Satan and his hosts.

Supernatural persons are pitted against each other. It is perfectly foolish for us to underestimate Satan's power. He is an actual, active, aggressive enemy. And this chapter reveals to us that he is the head of a host, organized, mobilized, and energized by himself. Our adversary is a supernatural person. What are some of his names? He is the deceiver, the devourer, the tempter, the accuser, a liar, a murderer. These names indicate his nature; they make us shiver with fear

and recoil with loathing. All these names indicate what he is like. He seduces, he deceives. His work is destructive and diabolical; and this is our adversary.

Satan - His Position

As a supernatural person he occupies a superior position. CHRIST Himself three times spoke of him as "**The prince of this world**," with governmental authority over men. He is "**The prince of the power of the air**," with governmental authority over evil spirits. He is "**The god of this world**," with spiritual authority over men.

Satan - His Power

He is a person with supernatural power. The Bible does not deny it; it calls that supernatural power "**The power of darkness**." He is strong, powerful, and mighty. He is powerful in his methods, which are those of the gangsters of the underworld. He works by wiles, strategies, devices, and subtleties. The Bible says he is powerful in organization. He works through principalities, and powers, and hosts of wickedness. He is powerful in equipment; he has a stronghold, and armor, he has spoils, and goods. Our adversary is a supernatural person, occupying a superior position, and exercising supernatural power.

Satan - A Defeated Foe

It is foolish to underestimate the power of Satan, but it is fatal to overestimate it. There are people who talk too much about the devil, and too much about his power. He likes to hear us talk about his power. His power is mighty, but it is not almighty: he is powerful, but he is not all-powerful. He is an absolutely defeated foe.

CHRIST is the Stronger Man, and He has bound the strong man, and has despoiled him of his goods. As the representative Man in the wilderness, He met the devil, and He won a decisive victory over him; and He won it in the only way in which you and I can win that same victory. He was led into the wilderness filled with the HOLY SPIRIT; and the only weapon He had was the Word of GOD.

Three times as He faced that tempter He said, "**It is written!**" And there is no man or woman in this tent who may not go back and gain the victory in that same way, filled with the HOLY SPIRIT, and with the precious Word in the mind and in the heart, ready to be used in any moment of temptation. The devil can be a defeated foe for you and for me.

The death of JESUS CHRIST wrested from Satan every vestige of his claim upon mankind. Through the resurrection and the ascension He returned to His Father as Victor over Satan all the forces of hell and of sin. He openly triumphed over all principalities and powers. Through His exaltation He was crowned by the Father, Lord of lords, and King of kings; Lord of the universe, and "**Head over all things to the Church**." Through His finished work JESUS CHRIST entered Satan's territory and won it back inch by inch for His Father. Satan was judged and sentenced and doomed when JESUS CHRIST died upon the Cross, but the sentence has not been fully executed, and will not be until CHRIST returns. So, in the meantime, he contests the Lord's victory, and he fights to retain sinners in his captivity, and to regain saints under his control.

This is where you and I come in in this warfare.

When JESUS CHRIST was upon earth every attack was against that precious physical body of His, the body He took upon Him in order that He might lay it down in death upon the Cross as your Saviour and mine. He rose out of that tomb with that same body, but a spiritual body. He is today at the right hand of the Father in that body; He is there as the God-Man, as your HIGH PRIEST and as mine. Now we are His mystical body; we are the only part of CHRIST that the devil can now touch; we are the visible part of Him on earth; that is why you and I come in in this awful warfare; your life and mine is a part of that battlefield on which this spiritual warfare is being conducted.

Satan - His Tactics

How does Satan work in this warfare? Our first necessity is to know the enemy's position; and the second, is to know the enemy's tactics.

"Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

We must understand Satan's objective. The Lord tells us what it is. He said to Peter, "**Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.**" Satan is hell's head gangster. He is in this world seeking to steal that pearl of great price that belongs only to the Lord JESUS CHRIST; and every bit of his work is done as a gangster of the underworld, one whose work is done through deception and subtlety. There is no mean and despicable trick he will not employ.

He revels in the torment of the saints. He bores his way through into your life and mine in order to get control of them. He comes in, mainly through our imaginations, our thoughts, our attitudes. He comes into that innermost part of our being so silently, and so subtly, that we hardly know it is he, and we hardly know he is there.

Then once he is there he attempts to overthrow and overcome us by the invasion of a sudden temptation, and at a time when he is likely to find us unsuspecting and unprepared.

Notice that GOD does not tell us to put on that armour of His in order to stand against the strength of the devil, but in order to stand against the wiles of the devil. That is what you and I need to guard against - the wiles of the devil. How does he get in through these wiles? I want to mention a few of the ways in which he is working today in us personally.

Through Depression of Spirit

Oh, the number of saints today in whom the devil not only has a place, but has control through depression! He brings to them doubts and discouragements regarding their spiritual condition. Whenever such doubts and discouragements assail you, you may know that it is of the devil. GOD never torments one of His children; and when this depression of spirit means torment and torture for you and me, we may know that it is the devil at work in our hearts. It is his mark.

All he wants is that we should get our eyes off of CHRIST. If he can do that through this concern as to our spiritual condition, he has won his first victory in your life and mine. He will lead us on to morbid introspection, and to a deadly dissection and analysis of our spiritual condition. It is fatal! The moment we find ourselves so doing we should be on our guard.

Satan never asks for the control of your life and mine at the first. All he asks is for a place there. We have that command so simple and definite, "**Neither give place to the devil.**" All he wants, first of all, in your life is standing room, and he knows if he can get standing room he will soon get control; and he can get that standing room through depression of spirit.

Through Delusion of Mind

The world is being flooded by organizations, and movements, and fellowships, many of them satanic in origin, many of them containing half-truths and half-lies, subtle counterfeits that deceive even the very elect. Satan today will take even that most glorious truth, the truth of the HOLY SPIRIT, and he will use it, and capitalize it for himself. Thus through cunning deception. Satan lays hold upon many hungry-hearted people, and leads them away from the Lord and His Word.

Through Distraction of Heart

There has never been a time of such universal distress upon the earth. Many of GOD's children have been caught in the vortex of it. The loss of position, money, or business; experiences of crushing sorrow; or unprecedented conditions, have so laid hold upon some and have brought such distraction of heart that people cannot even get their minds upon the Lord. I have had letters from people suffering from just this kind of distraction of heart.

Through Deflection of the Will

The supreme business of the Christian is to do the will of GOD. But what is GOD's will? That is the question that countless people are asking today. They are thoroughly distressed over matters of guidance. As a citizen, what is to be one's attitude toward world problems? There are things going on in the church that we cannot believe are according to the Word of GOD, or according to the standard set by CHRIST. As members of the church, what are we going to do? Are we to protest? Are we to stay in the church or not? There are problems on the mission field - the relation of the missionary to the Board; the relation of the missionary with his fellow workers; where, perhaps, there are two in the same station teaching exactly opposite things.

A pastor's wife in China came to me and said, "What am I to tell the heathen women I am bringing to church Sunday by Sunday, when at one service one missionary preached on the deity of CHRIST, and the next Sunday a missionary living on the same compound denied the deity of CHRIST?" What shall that pastor's wife do? These are problems which are facing us today as never before. There are the problems connected with our social life. Here is a home where the Word of GOD is believed and taught; and the children go out into the school, and the university, and into society, and they are forced almost into things which are against the principles of those parents. What are the parents to do? Stand out against these things, or yield to these things that

their children are having to face today as members of society? As members of society how can we keep unspotted from the world? So Satan tries to darken the mind, and to bring about discord.

Through Distress of Body

How many of GOD's saints are meeting real attacks from the evil one in the realm of the body within the evangelical part of the church of JESUS CHRIST.

These are some of the ways in which Satan is working today. They are enough to set before us the truth that we are in the midst of a spiritual warfare.

- Through Discord in the Home
- Through alienation between husband and wife, parents and children;
- Through misunderstanding between members of the same family.
- Through Division in the Church

Yes, division in that part of the church that is sound and true and evangelical. It has been my privilege to travel in ten different countries in Europe. I am sorry to say it, but I have scarcely touched in any country any work that is absolutely sound and true and evangelical, that there is not somewhere at the heart of it, or within it, division that is caused by intolerance of workers one with another, by insignificant things, by jealousies. It is the devil's most deadly work.

The Wrestler - Equipment for Warfare

What are we to do? We must admit the power of the adversary. He is bent on our undoing or overthrow. But need the Christian be fainthearted? Need he be overcome? No! He need not be defeated if he will take hold of these few verses in Ephesians 6, and do the things he is told to do there.

The Assurance of Power in CHRIST

We will think now of what is the Christian equipment for this warfare as revealed in these few verses. First, the assurance of power in CHRIST.

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Ephesians 6:10).

"Be strong!" That is what He is saying to us tonight. You will soon be returning to your homes. Oh, that these words might ring in your hearts, **"Be strong!"** What will the devil say to you? He will say, "Be fearful! Think of the dangers and difficulties ahead. Think of the home to which you have to return; the place of business; the social circle. Be cowardly! Give up, and turn back. Be weak! Sink under the weight of the circumstances of your environment. Be a deserter! - That is what he was - a deserter! Satan deserted God, and set up a kingdom of his own and he will try to get you and me to be deserters.

The devil will try to get us to look back and to turn back. You say, I was moved at that meeting; but I am afraid it was all emotion. How the devil loves us to say that when some decision is made under the conviction of the HOLY SPIRIT. In a moment when we are at our best and it is

only when we are at our best we should make our decisions - the devil will try to get us to say that it was all emotion: That will be the devil's voice to you; but the Lord is saying to you, "**Be strong!**"

Our strength, therefore, does not lie in outward armor, but in an inward attitude, in the assurance of our power in CHRIST. Do we enter the conflict assured of the power to win, or are we overcome with dread and fear before beginning? "**Be strong in the Lord!**" The Lord is more than a match for Satan. He has already bound the strong man; He already is Victor. Mark it so that you cannot help but see it constantly, that little word "**in.**" "**Be strong in the Lord!**" That little word contains the whole secret of victory over the devil. It is where we are that determines our victory. In CHRIST we are more than conquerors. "**Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.**"

Our power is in a Person.

Three times in the next few verses we read this word, "**That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil**" (verse 11). "**That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day**" (verse 13). "**Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked**" (verse 16). He is able, and we are strong in His power, and in the strength of His might. Mr. Raws, of the American Keswick Convention, has a little child who heard that hymn, "*Onward, Christian Soldiers!*" and the little three-year-old was singing it, "Undone Christian soldiers!"

That is the trouble with most of us, we are undone Christians, rather than Christians marching on to victory all the time.

The Assertion of our Position in CHRIST

Secondly, our equipment for this warfare is the assertion of our position in CHRIST. What is our position in CHRIST? Where is He, and where are we? Where is He? "**Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.**" That is where CHRIST is. Where are we? Turn back to the second chapter, "**And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus**" (Ephesians 2:6).

Why, if we had been made to stand together with Him, it would have been wonderful. But we are made to sit together with Him. And when we sit we are relaxed: we are resting. And we are seated together with Him "**in heavenly places,**" "**far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.**"

Is that divine rhetoric, or is it divine reality? It is because this truth is so precious to me that I glory in this privilege of passing it on. We will know constant victory if we will simply take our position in CHRIST, seated with Him in the heavenlies, "**far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.**"

It does not tell us in Ephesians 6 to fight. That is the trouble. We are such fighters:- we want to do the fighting; but it is CHRIST who does the fighting. All he asks of you and me is to stand in the victory that He has won, and is winning. Are you not tired of fighting? Then stop it; and do nothing but stand, unafraid, unmoved, undaunted, even before the devil and his hosts. We do not

fight for a position of victory but from one. Therefore we may stand in CHRIST, reckoning the battle won before it is begun. In the very thick of the fight; in the darkest hour - stand. And what will happen? Stand your ground on the day of attack, and having fought to the end, come off victors in the field.

The Acceptance of our Protection in CHRIST

Then, our equipment for this warfare demands an acceptance of our protection in CHRIST.

"Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

Paul knew much about soldiers; he was chained to one when he wrote this Epistle. He probably studied every part of that armor; he knew the value of each part. The armor is for protection; no part of the body must be exposed; even one vulnerable part might mean defeat.

"The whole armor" - We cannot pick and choose with this armor. We must put on the whole armor; it is not intended for comfort or convenience; and we are to wear it all the time.

"Of God" - It is the armor of GOD. What a relief that is! We do not have to make it. How little we know of Satan's strength and strategy! and of our own cowardice and conceit! But GOD knows all about him, and about us, and He provides the armor; and adapts that armor to the nature and the necessity of the warfare.

"Put on"; "Take unto you" - We are to put it on; it is not for show; it is for wear; it is for use. And, friends, when once we have put on all this armor it will not be very comfortable to sit down in an easy armchair! If we are not willing to be in the thick of the fight do not let us put this armor on. Notice that there is only one part of the body that is unprotected - it is the back. GOD expects no deserters. There is no protection for the back. I do not want the enemy to be able to hit me in the back because I deserted my GOD in the time of trial, or affliction, or some dark hour in my life. GOD does not expect one of us to retreat, but to go steadily on as Spirit-filled overcomers.

GOD's Call for Wrestlers

We have asked many things of Him this week, and, oh, He has granted them so abundantly!

We have received so much from Him. Now has He not a right to this last moment? Has He not now the right to make a request of you and me?

He is asking you tonight through this precious bit of His Word if you will give yourself to Him as a spiritual wrestler. He wants you to leave Keswick longing to get back in to the very thick of the fight, longing to get back to that difficult situation.

He is going to use you, perhaps, to win that soul that would mean the last one needed to complete the body of JESUS CHRIST, and so hasten His return. He is going to use you to go back and help some worldly, dissatisfied, defeated Christian to come into this blessed experience

of the fullness of the HOLY SPIRIT, that she also may be prepared for the coming of the Lord, if He should come tomorrow.

This is GOD's call to you and to me tonight. It is the call for spiritual wrestlers, for spiritual warriors, who will go or into this warfare that must grow worse and worse as the time for our Lord's return draws nearer and nearer. I ask you now if you will, in the silence of this moment, say: "Yes, Lord, I give myself to Thee in some fresh new way! Thou has asked for spiritual warriors. It is the Captain of the host who is asking for spiritual warriors. Lord, I respond! I give myself to Thee. And I ask Thee, if Thou canst trust me, to put me right out in the front firing-line, where the warfare is thickest."

Will you say that to GOD? This is what He ought to have from us as a glad, joyous response for all that He has given to you and me during the days of this week at Keswick.

END OF BOOK