

Daily Disciplines – The Good Fight of Faith: Part Four

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Battle Focused Sergeant's Time

By Robert Sims

Bible Text: Ephesians 4:17-5:21

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Welcome

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Hello, I'm Robert Sims. Thank you for listening to our broadcast today. We're in part four of our series on Fighting the Good Fight of Faith. Today we're going to talk about soldierly disciplines.

Before I get into the heart of the message today, I do want to share a little bit of good news. Nothing on a grand scale, but it's helpful to keep in mind the little small blessings that God sends our way to remind us of his love for us. Most of us across the United States this last week or two weeks and even longer, but we've been undergoing the Polar Vortex and just really bad snowy weather. We've had snow here in Randle, Washington for a few days off and on for the last several weeks including just a couple of days ago. But this morning, I saw one of those blessings of God to let us know that he's still thinking of us. The first robin of the year showed up at my windowsill this morning singing the news of the arrival of spring. I'm afraid he's a little bit early but I welcomed the news and looking forward to a couple more hours of snow but I'm really looking forward to warmer temperatures, a little less snow and a little less rain and some blue skies. Please, spring! And please, summer! Come on!

Now that I've shared that little bit of good news, that little bit of God's blessing, let's begin our lesson today.

Introduction

Our series we've been talking about Paul's command and urging to fight the good fight of faith so that we, at the end of our life, as Paul had at the end of his life, we'd have the testimony to say, "I've fought the good fight. I've finished the race. I've kept the faith." And Paul talked in his letter to Timothy also, to endure hardness or to share in hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Taking from my experiences as an Army Sergeant for 20 years in the Infantry, taking some lessons from my experiences about living hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Certainly not all those days were hard but there is hardness, and so is the Christian life. But in parallel, you're talking about a soldier leaving home and entering basic training, changing his entire worldview - and the first thing that the Army starts to change is not the outward walk of a soldier but the inner character.

Now, we use the putting the soldiers through hardness and affecting their outer walk but the heart of that initial training isn't to change the outside but it's to change the inside so much like the Christian faith. When we talk about spiritual warfare or being Christian soldiers, we don't start at Ephesians 6 and talk about the weapons and the armor of God, we start at Ephesians 1 and talk about faith, both that we come to Christ through faith and that by Christ and by faith we live in that faith day-to-day. A new soldier, when he goes into basic training, learns about his role to play in the Army's mission to protect the United States and our constitutional government from all enemies foreign and domestic, and to be able to take the fight to the enemy. He learns also to live and work and, if necessary, die as part of a team.

To be "Army Strong" isn't to look and pump up his muscles, his biceps, and say, "Look how strong I am." Army Strong means to live and to work and to rely upon the strength of the entire Army and to bear the burdens of each soldier's role in being that strength and delivering that strength on behalf of the people of the United States. In short: soldiers learn to live a life for something bigger than themselves - and the Christian life that you and I are called to is a life of something bigger than ourselves.

Also, Paul wrote that we Christian's are "more than conquerors" through Christ who loved us and that nothing will separate us from his love, not powers or rulers or anything in this life. But he also says that we are "as sheep led to the slaughter", that we dedicate our lives, if necessary, to the point of death, if necessary, for our Lord and Savior. Christian life is not about saying, "Thank you for your gift of eternal life. I'll see you when I die and until then, I'm going to live my life as I please." No, when we are born again, we are indentured servants to our new Lord and Master, Jesus Christ! Or in other words, in the parallel that I'm drawing, we are soldiers in his army.

HARD TRAINING

In drawing a parallel to basic training, new soldiers are having their character developed as they endure hardness, as they work and fight as a member of a new team. But that is a hard work and it's a daily work. Basic training and throughout an Army career is really

hard. One of the definitions of training that we use I could put this way: it's repetitive failure rebuilt as success. In other words, when you go out and you work out for physical training and you're doing push-ups and sit-ups and you're running, you do enough push-ups and enough sit-ups to the point where your muscles fail and you can't do any more. Then you go through a period of rest and then you go out the next day or a couple of days later, work those same muscles and try to do more but eventually you get to the point where your muscles fail. The same thing when you go out for a run, not that you run or work yourself to the point of injury but you work yourself to the point of you can't realistically do more and expect to get any gain out of it. So, you run the first run that we do in basic training is, "Wow, one quarter of a mile!" You've got one part, the majority of the new team is saying, "Wow, we only did a quarter of a mile," but you've got a portion out there that's half dying because they just ran a quarter of a mile for the first time in their life. It's kind of fun to watch. Not so much at four o'clock in the morning when it's happening, but it is fun to watch.

But each day they go out and they run a little bit further and gradually, those failures get rebuilt as success. Same thing throughout all the Army training that we do, you train to the point where you don't meet all the criteria on the checklist that meet the definition of success. In other words, you fail and you keep reworking that training until that list gets smaller and one day you finally get to the point where, "Good job! You did it. You passed the test." Now that we've done that, let's do it at night and let's do it faster. Thanks a lot! And so, it's a continual retraining and that training and that repetition of it and the training takes its toll and fatigue sets in and it gets harder and harder and harder and then you have a time of recovery and they say: "It's all done; you don't ever have to do it again!" Ha-ha. No, you go right back out and you start again the next day, either that task or the new task, and whatever it takes to be confident that you're going to survive on a battlefield and defeat the enemy.

The Christian life is also a hard life and it takes endurance to live it. Let's take a look at that call to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ and at the tools and the guidance that our Lord and Savior has given us to fight that fight and to endure that hardness through the failures to the point of success.

WALK IN NEW LIFE

Our text today is Ephesians 4:17-5:20. I'll be reading from the English Standard Version. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:17,

"17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity."

In other words, Paul is calling the new soldiers of Ephesus to remember their life back on the street when they lived according to their own desires and their own pleasures and their own sense of right and wrong and challenges them to put off that mindset and that way of life because there is something new. The demands of a life of a soldier require new thinking.

“20 But that is not the way you learned Christ! - 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Put off the old man

The life of a soldier is symbolized in one sense of putting off the street clothes and putting on the uniform. That uniform that you put on has standards of appearance. You don't wear the civilian jacket with your military uniform pants. For that matter, you don't wear the dress blues trousers with the Army combat uniform jacket. It doesn't work. That uniform takes a little bit of getting used to so that you know what item to wear with what item, which jacket to wear with which pair of pants. Even the little simple things of putting on those new boots, shining them to standard and then go out and walk a few miles, maybe even run a little bit and break them in, endure the blisters on your feet, go back that evening, get your next uniform or maintain that uniform, take those muddy, dirty, nasty pair of boots, clean them, put a new set of polish on it and shine it until it meets the standard for your Drill Sergeant the next morning. The same thing for a Christian life. There is a daily putting off of the old and putting on the new.

Be renewed in the spirit

But it's not just the outward appearance that God is concerned with. Verse 23 talked about being renewed in the spirit of your minds. The New Testament talks a lot about newness of life. Jesus Christ said, "I came to make all things new." The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing, you may discern what is the will of God." 1 Peter 1:3-4 Peter writes speaking of women, "Do not let your adorning be external - the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear - but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."

Now, that last text was written to women but certainly we could draw some applications to fighting men. It's not a bad thing to have internal beauty. As a matter of fact, it's a pretty good thing but let's say we just need, God looks at our outward appearance but also God looks in the heart and he's looking to find men of character, men that say what they mean and mean what they say, not outward shells that the minute you push them over, they fall down. Men that the Apostle Paul wrote that, "I don't want to fight as one

who simply is beating the air,” like an old character, Pee Wee Herman, punching dead air about a foot away from the guy he’s trying to punch. That’s not the life we want to live. Not that outward appearance but real strength from the inside lived all the way through from inside to outside: goodness, righteousness, character, selfless service.

Put on the new man

We are called not simply to put off the old man and to be renewed in the spirit of our minds so that our character and our beauty, if you will, our goodness and our righteousness boils up from inside to outside. Our compassion for others: is it just one of show or is true to our heart? But just being all Christ-like on the inside and then blowing it off and saying, “Well, Christ is still working on me,” when we fail, is horrible. God is looking on the heart of man but he’s also looking on the outside and he’s called us to put on the new self just like we’re putting on a new uniform.

This new self is created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. We can take a look at a parallel passage in Colossians 3:1-17. Paul writes,

“1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. 5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.”

Let me interject here for a moment: just as you were back when you lived on the street instead of being in the Army.

“8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.”

In other words, when you join the Army, your teammates to your left and right don’t look like you. They don’t talk like you, they don’t have the same skin color, they don’t have the same dreams and desires. But when you join the Army, you all wear green, you all bleed red and you’re all called to the same mission and to fight as a team.

“12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other;

as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Let’s take a look back at our text, Ephesians 4:25 and following. Paul writes,

“25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.”

How much of our day-to-day walk where we lose sight of the mission and lose sight of the team, lose sight of the calling of Christ upon our lives to take the gospel to the ends of the earth and to do so as a member of his church. But we - yielding to our sense of right and wrong, and our own sense of desires and what we want and what we want *when* we want it - do we give opportunity to the enemy? Let us not do that. Paul continues in verse 28,

“28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Put on Jesus Christ

Chapter 5:1, Paul continues,

“1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

There is another way to say “put off the old man, be renewed in your mind and put on the new man” or to “put off the works of death and put on life.” Paul puts it this way in Romans 13:14, “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” He wrote in chapter 5:1, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.” Here Paul writes “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” In other words, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, transforming the inner man in his image, being transformed from the darkness of this world to the image of Jesus Christ from the inside to the outside.

John wrote in his epistle, 1 John, that Jesus Christ “was manifested in order to destroy the works of the devil.” That was true 2,000 years ago when Jesus walked among men but the only Jesus that this dark world will see is you and I, that he is manifested in our lives. Not just plastic that we put on on the outside and look, “Woohoo, look at me!” but Jesus Christ living in us, manifested to the outside.

The life of a Christian is a hard life. It begins anew every day. Paul tells us of this new life, “Let us walk in newness of life.” Paul gives us some standards to live that new life: we walk in love, we walk in light and we walk in wisdom. We are called to walk in these things.

WALK IN LOVE

Ephesians 5:2, let’s talk about walking in love. Paul writes,

“2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Paul calls us to walk in love and he gives us a standard for that walk. Not love as is convenient for us or love as we may define it but the love that was demonstrated by Jesus Christ who loves us and gave himself on a cross to die on our behalf so that we could have his righteousness and have an eternal inheritance with God the Father. God calls us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and he defines that that we make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. Either put off the old man, put on the new. Walk in love as Christ loves. What does that look like, you ask? Paul gives us some ideas in verse 3,

“3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. 5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not become partners with them.”

We need to look at also Galatians 5:14-15. Paul reminds us, “For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” He wrote again in Romans 13:8-10, “Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

To walk in love is to obey the commands of God's word and you do that not to puff up your chest and check off the list of the criteria to say, "Yup, living a good Christian life." That's not the motivation. If that's our only motivation, I guarantee you, you fail every time. The motivation is a demonstration of our love for our God and our Savior and a demonstration of that love and a fulfillment of that love to our neighbors. We are called to walk in love, a love that sacrifices ourselves and our own desires and our own dreams just as Christ did when he lived among men and to do so, if necessary, to the point of death.

WALK IN LIGHT

We are called to walk in love and we are also called to walk in light. Ephesians 5:8,

"8 For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do," the ungodly, "in secret. 13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14 for anything that becomes visible is light."

Throughout Scripture, there are great parallels between this world in darkness and the coming of the Kingdom of God in Christ Jesus as light.

Let's take a look at 2 Corinthians 4:4. Paul writes that "the god of this world," in other words Satan, "has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Let's take a look at the words of Jesus. A familiar passage, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." Jesus says that God loves us so much that he sent his only Son to die for us and that whosoever will that believes in him, believes that he came to pay for our sin by dying on a cross and that we can have forgiveness of our sins simply by asking and putting our faith in him and his work and his power and that Jesus Christ had victory over death when he rose again from the grave the third day.

Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved but not everyone is going to call, not everyone is going to believe. Why? In 3:19, Jesus continues, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." The people of this world that are blinded by the enemy reject the

light because the light reveals the darkness and the darkness that is in them and that their deeds are evil. In other words, the light reveals sin and that is an unpopular message, so much so that this world does the best it can to redefine light and darkness and good and evil and right and wrong.

Isaiah 5:20-21, the prophet writes, “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!” John 8:12, again, Jesus speaking, “I am the light of this world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” We are called as his children, as children of God, as followers of Jesus Christ to walk in light, to walk as light bearers to shine that light of God into the darkest corners of this world: into our own hearts, in our own family, in our own community, in our own church. Darkness is in Washington, DC or in your state capital, or somewhere in the third world. And “how horrible *those people* are out there”. Let’s look in our own hearts, our own families, & our own communities and see where we can shine as light into the darkness.

We are called to live as light, to walk in light and we are called to be light bearers to other people. As chapter 26:17, Jesus sent out Paul with this commission, “I send you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God and that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” We shine the light so that we can wake those who are asleep.

Our text continues in verse 14,

“14 Therefore it says, ‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’”

WALK IN WISDOM

We are called to walk in love, we are called to walk in light and we are called to walk in wisdom to those who are on the outside. Ephesians 5:15,

“15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

What is Paul talking about here? Walking in wisdom? A parallel passage is Colossians 4:5-6, “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” 1 Peter 3:15-16, Peter testifies, “in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”

Jesus has called us to shine the light into the darkness of this world. To do so means that we have to live and walk in darkness, not just huddled away in a closet somewhere shining our light and saying, “Woo, look how bright that light is!” The call is to take that light and walk out into the world in the midst of the darkness. Not to be conformed to the world but to shine the light in the darkness. That is a difficult task. Matthew 10:16, as Jesus sent out the disciples to the cities that he was about to visit, warned his disciples, “Behold I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

So, to be wise means to consider where we’re walking and to use discretion about where we walk and how we walk and who is watching us and who is listening to our words.

Back to our text in verse 15 says,

“15 Walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

What is the will of the Lord? For our own lives, we’ve already been talking about that, that we know the times and the seasons that we live accordingly but we also look at it from God’s point of view. Not for our lives but for those who yet have not seen that light, that might be blinded by the enemy, that are walking in their own conceit, thinking of themselves as wise but yet they’re foolish, at times even dangerous. But God so loved them that he sent his only begotten Son. And that he sent Paul and all the apostles out to the nations to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light.

What is the will of God? Let’s put it in a negative. One of the apostles has written that God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to knowledge in Christ Jesus. Proverbs 11:30 gives us an insight about walking in wisdom and what God defines as wisdom. “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life and whoever captures souls is wise.” Not capturing souls, not capturing men like a human army does it in imprisonment and in bondage and in death possibly but capturing their hearts, persuading their minds, speaking words of grace and life that transforms men from darkness to light, from death to life, from the power of Satan to the power of God. God has caused us to speak words of grace, speaking the truth in love, offering real life and demonstrating that real life.

Paul continues in verse 18, what does this walking in wisdom look like?

“18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

What does walking in wisdom look like? It means being aware of where we walk, being aware of the will of God, being aware of the call, his call upon our lives and the mission

that he has called us to, to take light to darkness and being aware of our teammates to the left and our right. That we work as a team and we don't tear down each other but we speak words that build up one another. That we don't grumble all the time in how miserable our life is and how miserable our family is and how horrible our local church is. And especially the guy up there in that pulpit, "Ack, he teaches too long," or, "He's so boring," or whatever. In other words, don't tear down one another but build each other up is what we're called to. And that we don't grumble against God all the time but give thanks and praise to his name. And to shine that light by and declare his love by living a life that is thankful for his blessings. And thankful for our brothers and sisters to our left and right in the church. And thankful for the family that God has placed us in. And thankful for the Holy Spirit that lives within us, empowering us to live that life, putting off the old man, putting on the new life and walking in that newness of life.

REBUILDING FAILURE INTO SUCCESS

Walking in love, walking in light, walking in wisdom is not an easy life. Every day I and I suspect you, are faced with failure. A failure sometimes just makes us plain want to quit. Take our toys and go home. We're not appreciated anyway. We're not successful at this, let's just try something new. Let's go back and walk on the street - back before I joined the Army, and was told I have to live on mission in part of a team and to sacrifice my desires and my dreams to fulfill the duty that I'd been called to. I just want to quit. In other words, we feel like Peter did after failing Christ on his way to the cross, and even after he had seen a risen Christ who had defeated death, who came back and greeted Peter and the apostles with open arms and a new commission. Peter, outside that influence of Christ and that new joy of seeing him in victory, and instead of reveling in a new call to take the message to the ends of the world [as a matter of fact, probably in fear of it] Peter just said, "I'm going fishing." And he wasn't talking about just going out and enjoying a few hours out on a boat, casting a lure in the water and if there's a fish that bites, great. If not, that's fine. Just enjoy a nice alcoholic beverage and having a good day. No, Peter was saying, "I quit. I'm going home. I'm going back to my old life." How tempting is that for us when we face failure? When we face that new challenge of a new day? And new hardships?

Today is a new day!

Each day takes a renewed strength, a daily discipline. Both the power of God living within us and a resolve in our own hearts to live for him. Philippians 2, verse 12-16, Paul writes to the church, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." That gives us great hope and calls us to great resolve. That great hope is that God is working in us, God is not yet finished working on me, but calls us to work out our own salvation. You and I most often use that phrase or hear it phrased "work out." In the terms of "working out" in the gym. In other words, you go to the gym and you lift the weights and you work on those demonic exercise machines that tell you that you have to work a certain number of minutes at a certain amount of pace or you're an utter failure.

You have to put yourself through that, why? To be healthy. To be fit. To look good. To be attractive to our mate (or the opposite sex if you don't have one of those). To feel good about ourselves. But also to give us the energy, the vibrancy to tackle the demands of the day. How often can we go out and take a run in the morning and after that run - as long as we haven't overdone it, but we've worked out appropriately to our present condition, we've stretched ourselves just a little bit, we ran just a little bit faster than we did before, we lifted just a little bit more weight than we have before - the rest of the day you feel like you can take on the world! Nothing can stop you!

It takes both for the Christian. It takes the power of God Almighty that raised Christ from the dead, living and working within us. Working within us so that we have the strength to make full value, to take the salvation that God has given us and make full use of it, not for our glory but for his glory. But there is a common thread in this verse, it's *work!* It's God working - but it's also us working. In other words, enduring hardness, sharing in hardness as a good soldier for Jesus Christ.

Paul continues in Philippians 2, verse 14, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine," notice these words, "among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life." You and I are called to walk in newness of life, to walk in love, to demonstrate God's love, to walk in light and to share the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ to others and to walk in wisdom and call this world to give up what they call wisdom, which God calls foolishness and to accept God's word as wisdom and that new wisdom defines their life and guides their life and they become soldiers who endure hardness walking a new life every day, walking in love, walking in light and walking in wisdom and taking those to this world that does not know love, does not know light and does not know real wisdom.

Let us live as good soldiers of Jesus Christ and may we, at the end of our days, have this testimony: that we have fought the good fight.

---- END OF SERMON --- Intermission -----

I'm going to take a few seconds of a break and get a drink of water. If there is anyone out there listening live and you want to call in, we have just under ten minutes left and you can call in and give your feedback or I will have some thoughts in closing and also share a little bit more about myself in ministry. But if you do want to call, the phone number is 347-637-2144 for any comments or questions on topic. *A short music break.*

Information about Battle Focused Ministries

Alright, enough of the music. I've got a little bit of water in me and I'm re-energized to talk a little bit. I don't have any callers so let me just a little bit share about Battle Focused Ministries. You can find Battle Focused Ministries online at www.battlefocused.org.

Our ministry is designed, and the heart of the ministry is, *spiritual warfare*. And we do that, not through what's called a *deliverance* model where we talk about, we have meetings and we cast out demons, and we try to find demons under every bush or in every person and perform exorcisms, and that type of stuff. No, we have a different model, the model that requires hard work. Both work on behalf of God that he creates brand new life. But after he creates that brand new life, God calls us to the work - and that's Christian *discipleship*.

The purpose of our ministry is to help local churches by enhancing situational awareness of the spiritual battlefield in order to develop and equip leaders that fight the good fight of faith, what we've been talking about, encourage spectators to share in the hardships as good soldiers in Jesus Christ and to warn the innocent bystanders of impending danger.

One of the early lessons that a soldier learns is to keep his eyes open and to be aware of the circumstances in his environment. It doesn't do you a bit of good - and we'll talk more about this in a couple of weeks when we talk about weapons - a soldier can have the best equipment, have the best training, be a fully qualified expert in marksmanship, but if he's asleep on guard duty at the advance of the enemy, it doesn't do a bit of good. To be aware of the battlefield in all the different ways the enemy can sneak up on us and defeat us. That is the overall ministry.

Spiritual Warfare Battle Matrix

And you'll find on our website a [Spiritual Warfare Battle Matrix](#) that gives an overview of the battlefield that we fight. With God, our Father, leading one side through his church and his Son, Christ. And Satan, our enemy on the other fighting through this dark world. More about that in later episodes.

Situational awareness of the spiritual battlefield: Three objectives

But in enhancing that situational awareness of the spiritual battlefield, we have a threefold task:

1. To develop and equip leaders who are aware of that spiritual battlefield. And who are aware of, not only the individual soldier's way of fighting and defeating the enemy, but how we as the Lord's army, the church of the living God, fighting together, striving together, not *against* each other but *with* each other, take the fight to the gates of hell and overcome the enemy.
2. To encourage the vast number of our congregations who are spectators to the morning service. And then after a good... if it's good, I mean - if the worship team hits all their notes and they look like they were prepared and if they've gotten hold of the throne of God and that the preacher preaches a really good message that was applicable to their life... "Oh, how wonderful it is!" And then they go home and live like they hadn't heard a thing the preacher said and haven't sung a single word of praise (which is also possible), and they go home and live their lives as fulfilling their desires, fulfilling their dreams.

And take just a little bit of biblical truth here and a little bit of biblical truth here and apply it to their lives, make their lives a little bit more comfortable, help their family be a little bit more harmonious, make themselves more successful at their job. But they're not on mission for Jesus Christ, and they're not living and working as a member of our and your local Christian church. That's something we hope to fix with a little bit of help from you and God working through us. And I need a lot of help!

3. To warn the innocent and the bystanders of impending dangers. In other words, there are three types of people: those who make things happen, those that follow when things happen and those that sit around and say, "Huh?" And we need to reach those people.

We teach Christian soldiers how to secure victory in [spiritual warfare](#) through personal evangelism, discipleship and teamwork in the local church in order to destroy the works of the devil in this generation through the manifestation of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That is our ministry.

Why do I call the ministry by its given name: Battle Focused?

Battle Focused is simply the Army's way of saying: "major on the major and minor on the minor."

Or, as a popular leadership teacher talks about planning your day: you put the big rocks in first and then you put the small rocks in. You put in the big roles and the big tasks. You schedule the big roles, the big tasks, and the big missions in the calendar - and then you go in and you put all the little small stuff.

That's basically what *battle focused* means. It's talking about training on those things that help an individual soldier and the unit, the team, accomplish the given mission and to do so within the limited amount of time that we've been given. Now, "battle focus" without the "ed" added to it, is a concept officers use. And they use that training concept - that major on the major, minor on the minor - to set the training objectives for sergeants like myself and the subordinates below us. So that by the time that concept gets to us, it's not *battle focus*, it's *battle focused*, past tense. In other words, someone has already turned the knob and focused. So, Battle Focused Ministries doesn't mean that we take our eyes off of Jesus Christ and put them on the battlefield. God forbid! It means that God, my Commander, has given me the training objectives: preach the gospel, make disciples and equip the church to take the fight to the gates of hell.

May God add blessing to the reading and teaching of his word. Amen. Thank you so much for listening today. You can find more information at our website [Battle Focused Ministries](#), and connect with us at our Facebook and Twitter pages - each named BattleFocused. Be sure to check out our Spiritual Warfare Battle Tracking Matrix. You can download the PDF file free of charge. This broadcast has been a production of *Battle Focused Ministries* - equipping Christian saints for spiritual warfare. Until next time, may the grace of Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.