

your life with all its bruises and burns, its brands and pains to the only source of relieving succor.

There are many things about you that you can never change . . . but God can and that's the sum of it. That's the business that God is in . . . erasing the leop-ard's spots, cleansing the leper's sores, removing the pangs of venomous guilt. That is why we sing that old invitational song, "Just as I am . . ." God will take you as you are and make you as you ought to be. Such is the divine mystery of regeneration . . . that wondrous process of conversion.

The dry bones of self-defiance can be clothed with new life and movement; the dusty desert of futility and self-despising can become a verdant oasis where clear waters flow. But sitting in the corner of self-dejection and depression will never

permit the fragrance of new life to be breathed through your nostrils!

HONEST EFFORT

You, too, can do something about it. Get up off the cushions of self-pity and put yourself to some honest effort and watch the change. Why, a hundred years ago one-half of all the patients operated on died of infection. Lord Lister set himself to pitying them. Then he set himself to honest research. He worked and waited three years without success. Then he discovered the world-famous antiseptic and the result was that more lives were saved than the total number of lives lost in all the wars during the 19th century. An honest effort to change things did it!

God stands now at your heart's door saying in deadly serious words, "Why despise or defy yourself when you can dedicate it and truly live?"

"I HAVE FOUGHT . . ."

July 27, 1958

Scripture: II Timothy 4:2-8

Life is a battle from the cradle to the grave.

No one knew this fact better than the Apostle Paul who, at the end of his life said, "I have fought." He could have said, "I have loved, I have cried, I have suffered" with equal justification but instead, he said, "I have fought a good fight." These words have real meaning for the people to whom he wrote since their country was occupied by foreign troops.

Warfare was the best known art of that day as well as our day. Little wonder that Paul would have used a term so familiar to the people.

Life's warfare is waged on many battlefields. For multi-millions it is a battle for meat and bread. The gnawing, constant sweat to keep body and soul together is never ended for most.

Others fight intellectual battles . . . warring in the mind with all its contradictions and conflicts.

Then there is a spiritual warfare in which our spirits are in struggle with spirits of other religions.

Some fight themselves, or other people, or God. All will agree that life is one battle after another.

TWO WORLDS

This fact is made necessary by admitting that we are citizens of two worlds . . . this life and the life hereafter. Were this one all, then one could surrender to the baser appetites, the lustful indulgence. But he is born for other and more than this life, hence the struggle upward and the crossfire that results. His two natures assure fighting: the nature of conscience and spiritual refinement demanding purity; the old, unregenerate nature too akin to dust demanding sloven backwardness and vulgarity.

There are no final battles in life. Each generation must fight its own. The battles for freedom for instance, are never finally won, they must be fought and re-fought much as the citizens of the Netherlands who must constantly repair their dikes lest the relentless waves of the Sea creep in and deposit their death-dealing salts.

If everybody alive were won to Christ,

the job would have to be done over in the next generation. Yes, its a warfare . . . a constant, unending, demanding fight, and those who refuse to fight under the guise of a weakness miss the real nature of the struggle. Some would tear from the Scriptures all the phrases that smack of any type of militarism . . . they would erase the beligerent, symbolic lines of many hymns believing by so doing that they are returning to the real nature of what Jesus said and did.

Now, don't misunderstand me: Christianity places no laurels at the feet of warmongers. But by the same reasoning neither does it endorse a weak silliness as the nature of its Founder.

PREPARE TO SUSTAIN WOUNDS

Then, if you admit that life is warfare for a Christian, be prepared to receive and sustain your scars and wounds. What kind of fighting is it if no one gets hurt? There has never been a war yet where no purple hearts resulted. The countless cemeteries the world around give proof to this belief. Fighting means that someone gets hurt . . . inevitably. No immunity is offered us just because we are wearing the uniform of the army of salvation.

The graves of the unknown soldiers in this blessed conflict are innumerable . . . unknown but to God. To face the enemy with the realism of expectation is to face him aright . . . that is the nature of things. So be prepared to bleed and die if needs be.

As you struggle against personal or group evil wherever you live, if in your business you must fight for what is right no matter how unpopular it makes you, if in your school you take a stand in courageous intelligence against the rabble, if at home to maintain decency and self-respect you must have a cleaning out of that which is sordid, vulgar and debasing . . . then remember that such courageous action will draw the fire of the unregenerate and the fire will burn. I am saying to you that as Christ's followers you are expendable, let us therefore stop the crying, the resentment when blows fall on us as a result of service in His name. It has been that way from the beginning. Jesus warned that we would be persecuted for righteousness sake . . . that we would be dragged before judges and magistrates . . . that all kinds would accuse us. But he also said some-

thing else, something better, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you."

WHOM TO FIGHT

The rest of this message is to describe the nature of the enemies whom we are to fight. What are the targets in this warfare of Christianity? Other denominations? Another race? Are we to fight those whom we call "foreigners?" Who are the enemies of Christianity? One another? Ourselves? We are exhorted to keep the whole armor of protection ready as the fight may break out at any time. But, whom are we to fight?

Well, certainly not yourself, as many have a habit of doing. Oh, there is a certain type of self that is to be fought: the self of mediocrity, the type of self that would disdain the fight . . . this kind is to be fought constantly. But to be your worst enemy, to be at incessant warfare with yourself, means that no energies are left to fight the real enemy. My, what serenity of soul would come over us if we declared peace with ourselves. What strange new direction would be given to life, if the implements of self-warfare were beaten into plowshares and pruning hooks.

Nor should we fight our friends in this Christian warfare. Paul spent much of his time trying to pour oil on the troubled waters between professing Christians. His personal epistles are rife with conciliatory passages, trying to reconcile a feuding congregation. Isn't it strange that we often hurt the ones we love most? Sometimes in our anger about those who have harmed us, living in distant places, we take out our anger on the persons nearest to us . . . though they may have no guilt in the matter at all. The foolish shadow boxing about those who write anonymous letters, or the boss who doesn't understand us . . . often lands the blows on the ones who love us best.

FIGHTING WITHIN

No sight in Christendom is uglier than the feuds that go on either within a given church or denomination, feuds where supposedly adult Christians resort to their little knives and scabbards. The constant snipping between denominations, though of a more subtle technique than former generations, nonetheless speaks of a warfare that is totally inexcusable.

Many fight God as though He were the enemy! Foolishness indeed . . . yet throgs vent their wrathful anger on their best Friend . . . yea, God Himself.

The real enemy on whom one should train his guns is Satan. It is he that has set himself to destroy you and all the energies that you can ever muster though you live out your three-score and ten will be needed in that direction. Land your blows with precision . . . fight with accurate effort . . . give direction to each shot.

Be not like the boxers in a recent bantam weight division that I witnessed on television. Such flailing of arms, such un-rhythmic exertion the like of which I have never seen before. By the second round both were completely exhausted . . . a poor performance indeed. Christians cannot fight like that . . . Satan will spare his strength and merely wait until we are exhausted if we do not subtly enter the arena with timing, control, and intelligence.

HOW TO FIGHT

How shall I fight? Ah, here is the real test in the matter. The way of the world is to return evil for evil . . . if smitten on one cheek, then smite back as you were smitten. But the way of Jesus Christ was the way of reasoned non-belligerence. The sword of kindness will cut through all the fat of human wrath into the real meat of

reconciliation.

When the battalions of love are deployed in the field, then the battle takes a new turn. The Friends call it, "friendly persuasion." But will it work? Ah, let no loudmouthed militarist rush in with his answer! The world has never really tried the way of the cross. We know far more about grenades, bombs, and explosives than we do about reconciliation, turning the other cheek and walking in love and lifting.

Antoine de Saint Exupery in his *Wind, Sand and Stars*, pictures Leo from the trenches in Spain calling out across eight-hundred yards of no man's land to his "enemy" one night: "Hi, Antonio. Are you asleep? Antonio, it's me, Leo."

Then the answer came, "Quiet, go to bed! Time to sleep."

But Leo calls again, "Antonio, what are you fighting for?"

"Spain," is the answer. "And you?"

Leo answers, "The bread of my brothers."

After a pause one says, "Good night, friend."

The reply without any hesitation, "Good night, friend."

Since we must fight, let us fight evil whether it is within us or within society, sustaining the wounds as they come, until we lay down our swords before the Prince of Peace.

THE BAPTIST HOUR STATION CHANGES

NEW STATIONS

Gadsden, Ala.	WGAD	1350 kc	6:00 p.m.
Port St. Joe, Fla.	WJOE	1570 kc	4:00 p.m.
Shreveport, La.	KWKH	1130 kc	9:30 a.m.
Shelby, N. C.	WADA	1390 kc	4:00 p.m.
Big Lake, Tex.	KBLT	1290 kc	7:30 a.m.
Othello, Wash.	KRSC	1450 kc	8:30 a.m.

CANCELLATIONS

Pueblo, Colo.	KFEL
New Iberia, La.	KVIM
Lexington, Mo.	KLEX
Millville, N. J.	WMLV
Edenton, N. C.	WCDJ
Athens, Ohio	WOUB
Levelland, Tex.	KLVT