

The Front Line

In many parts of our world, the Church of Jesus Christ is persecuted, even unto the death.

But for many of us, this hasn't been our experience.

Oh I know we might be reproached for His name's sake, but as Hebrews 12:4 points out---"**You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.**"

However, even in the relatively peaceful environment we live in, there is a war going on.

It can not be seen by the human eye, but nevertheless it is very real.

And in Ephesians 6:12, the curtain is literally drawn back on our true situation.

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."

Yes, there's a war going on between light and darkness.

And, as in any battle, it's good to know where the front line is.

Yes, down through the ages, it has been customary for opposing armies to draw up on either side of a front line.

Take, for instance, the army of Israel.

In 1 Sam.17:1-2 we read---"**And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and they encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array against the Philistines. The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel**

**stood on a mountain on the other side,
with a valley between them."**

At least with a front line, you knew the enemy was in front of you and your friends were behind you.

And I've been told that one of the biggest problems in the Vietnam War was the absence of a front line.

You had to be on your guard continually, for you never knew where your enemy was, or *who* he was.

Yes, it's very difficult to fight a war when there's no definite division between good and evil, light and darkness.

But that's exactly the condition Satan wants to keep us in.

If he can keep Christians in the grey area, if he can blur the line between right and wrong, he has won the victory.

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But God doesn't operate in grey areas, and during His earthly ministry, God's Son refused to blur the line between good and evil.

Oh, He was kind and forgiving, but He was also careful to identify His enemies, both physically and spiritually.

For instance, concerning the Jews, He made no bones about which side they were on.

John 8:44 **"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do."**

And, in fact, in this chapter, Jesus talks a lot about light and darkness.

For instance in V 12, He identified Himself as being on the side of light.

In fact, He is the light.

"---I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

V 23 **"And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world."**

And again, in V 38 **"I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father."**

And then we have those very revealing words, spoken in V44, **"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do."**

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And I find it quite ironic that when the religious leaders came to arrest Jesus, they operated under a cloak of darkness, both physically and spiritually.

And not only that, but Jesus made it His business to point that out.

Luke 22:52-53 **"---Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? "When I was with you daily in the temple,**

you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

Certainly it was prudent to arrest Jesus while the populace slept, for their leaders knew all too well, that **"the common people heard Him gladly."**

But that wasn't the only reason.

You see, they were operating under **"the power of darkness"** and under the direction of their **"father the devil."**

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And I don't think Satan could have been more obvious in his opposition than during the time around Jesus' crucifixion.

However, even though we might not be as aware of his insidious presence, we must be ever vigilant and conscious of the fact that we must stand **"--- against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,**

against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."

And as Ephesians 5:6 admonishes us, we must **"walk as children of light."**

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But there's another aspect to being the **"children of light,"** and it's got nothing to do with war.

It's got to do with peace, and the fact that Jesus told us in Matthew 5:14-16---"**You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who* are in the house. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."**

Yes, we **"are the light of the world"** because God's Holy Spirit dwells within us.

We're lights because we're part of Jesus' spiritual body, and He is light.

No, He didn't ask us to shine.

He's already made us *lights*.

It's not something we must *do*, but something we must *not* do.

We must not *hide* our light, but let it

"shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

So then our mission is twofold.

We must be soldiers of Jesus Christ, and we must be ambassadors for Jesus Christ.

You might say we have been given a commission very similar to Paul's.

Not only must we battle against spiritual darkness, but we must allow Christ's light **"to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they**

may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."