

The War to End all Wars: Romans 13:8-14

Veterans Day & 100th Anniversary of Armistice Day. November 11, 2018:

Portions adapted from Veteran's Day 2012 by Steve Shepherd @ SermonCentral.com

Today is both Veteran's Day and the 100th anniversary of the end of World War One. One hundred years ago today on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, of 1918, the armistice agreement was signed. We will acknowledge that event this day by joining with churches across the nation in ringing our bells 21 times at 11a.m., and taking that time to pray for the end of all wars.

But first, since it is also Veterans Day, we certainly want to honor all those who have served in the armed forces. And I also thought in view of the convergence of these days with the recent election, and the fear that as a nation we may actually be headed towards another civil-war-of-sorts, that this would be an appropriate day to talk about war in general as a result of a spiritual war we are still fighting – whether or not we know it.

But let's start with appreciations: If you have served in the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, National Guard, or Coast Guard, please stand.

If you have an immediate family member who is serving or has served in any branch of the military, please also stand.

We thank you and all those who fought and are still fighting for our national freedom. Thank you for loving this land enough to be willing to die for it – We honor you, appreciate you. and celebrate you today. (please be seated)



Back in the 50's When Dwight D. Eisenhower was President, he received a letter from eight-year-old Kevin Aiken of Trumbull, CT. Kevin wrote, *"After listening to the news about the cold war, I am worried about the people in the world. In thinking it over, I have a plan. Get all the leaders together who want war, put them in a ring and let them fight it out."*

I'm sure that many veterans feel this way about war. Just let those who want to fight, do the fighting! Don't involve everybody else in it! War is a terrible thing and yet it seems that war has always been an inevitable part of our world. Jesus told his disciples

"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars,
but see to it that you are not alarmed.
Such things must happen, but the end is still to come."
Matt. 24:6

Here, in Matthew, chapter 24, Jesus was answering his disciples' nervous questions about the destruction of the temple – an event which he had just predicted which then took place in 70 A.D – but looking down through the ages, Jesus instead talked about the continuation of both war and troubles that would plague all nations until the end of human history.

Sadly, until Jesus returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Wars do seem inevitable. Jesus said, *nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs* (vs 8).

War of any kind is such a horrible thing, why do people seem so eager to go to war? I find it ironic to be quoting, Gen. Tecumseh Sherman – seeing that at the end of the Civil War he intentionally did that which he was complaining about. Sherman said.

I am tired and sick of war. Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, for vengeance, for desolation. War is hell !

I do agree with Sherman, if you've never been through a war then you just don't know how horrible it truly is. However, based on Scripture, I would argue that: **WAR IS HELLISH, BUT NOT HELL!** Nothing is as horrible as Hell. That Hell is a real place is one of the reasons why we have been joined into the Lord's army – to do our best to help prevent any person from ever ending up there. **Yet war is hellish, because every war that has ever been, has been inspired by and is fought against the forces of Hell.**

Here is another irony, World War I was billed as "*the war to end all wars,*" when in fact, most of the wars that have happened since had their groundwork laid by World War I. The Great Depression, World War II, the Holocaust, the Cold War, Korean War, Vietnam War, the Israeli and Middle East conflicts, even the civil wars in Lebanon, Iraq, and now Syria all have roots leading back to that war that was going to end all wars.

A third irony is that they also called WW1 "The Great War," but WW2 qualifies as perhaps the greatest or the most hellish war in history. In all, 61 countries with 1.7 billion people, three-fourths of the world's population, took part. In terms of money spent, it has been put at more than \$1 trillion dollars, which makes it the most expensive war of all.

The human cost of lives is estimated to have been 60 million dead – 25 million of those military and 36 million civilians including the 5 to 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust .

Then after that, came the Korean War, Vietnam, and all the Middle East Wars which brings us up to today. War is indeed hellish!

There are some who say that war is never justified. But even the Bible declares that there are appropriate causes to go to war. And while some aspects of war are never right, regardless of the war, still we must support those went. As the saying goes: All veterans gave some but some gave all in behalf of this country. As Army veteran and author Charles M Province wrote.

It is the Soldier, not the minister
Who has given us freedom of religion.
It is the Soldier, not the reporter
Who has given us freedom of the press.
It is the Soldier, not the poet
Who has given us freedom of speech....
It is the Soldier, not the lawyer
Who has given us the right to a fair trial.
It is the Soldier, not the politician
Who has given us the right to vote.
It is the Soldier who salutes the flag,
Who serves beneath the flag,
And whose coffin is draped by the flag,
Who allows the protester to burn the flag.”

So today we do want to honor all our armed service veterans. To you, veterans, we owe a debt of gratitude because you were willing to go, to serve and to give on behalf of the United States of America! Thank you and God bless you!

Now let's turn our thinking to the root of all wars, and the real war to end all wars, and what it takes to be a veteran of the faith in Jesus Christ.

Think about this for a moment: Realize that all the wars in the history of our world have been the result of a spiritual war that has gone on since time immemorial and which still causes daily casualties.

In bits and pieces our Bible tells a story of how, in a time before our time, one of God's highest ranking angels rebelled and succeeded in stealing control of the earth away from the humans God had placed there to care for it. The rest of human history, as our Bible tells the story, is of God working to righteously win his lost children and planet back. The turning point of this eternal war happened when

<p>in the fullness of time, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children Galatians 4:4-6</p>

Jesus won the war for our souls at the cross. It was there that Satan, our ancient enemy was ultimately defeated. At the end of time there will be judgment for Satan and all God's enemies, our planet will be restored and all who have called upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But until that time the battle rages on and all of us who have named Christ as our savior and Lord have a vital role to play until God brings human history to its final conclusion.

This is why in today scripture text, Paul urges us to

put on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and make no provision for the flesh,
to gratify its desires.
Romans 8:14

At the close of his letter to the Christians in Ephesus, Paul gave this charge.

Put on the whole armor of God,
so that you may be able to stand
against the wiles of the devil.
Ephesians 6:10-12

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. **Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.** For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 6:10-12*

This is the spiritual war I have been telling you about. You might say, by virtue of our being born into God's family we have also joined "The Lord's Army" (remember singing the kid's song: *I may never march in the infantry...*). Because, in this war there is no neutral ground, no civilian non-combatants. Everyone you meet, is knowingly or unwittingly fighting for one side or the other. As C.S. Lewis once quipped there are no mere mortals everyone of us is either an angel or a devil in the making. If you know this and you are on the Lord's side, then you had better be prepared to fight, because you will be attacked. How then should we live? How do we prepare? How do we fight the good fight?

- 1- Obey your Commander
- 2- Engage the enemy
- 3- Fight to the end

I. OBEY YOUR COMMANDER

A blowhard Air Force major was promoted to colonel and got a new office. The first morning he was in his new office an airman knocked on the door and asked to speak to him. The colonel, feeling the urge to impress the young airman, picked up his phone and began talking.

"Yes, General, thank you. Yes, I will pass that information along to the President this afternoon. Yes, goodbye, sir." Then, turning to the airman, he barked, "AND WHAT DO YOU WANT?"

"Nothing important, sir," said the airman, "I JUST CAME TO HOOK UP YOUR TELEPHONE."

Some people have authority and some just "wanna be" in authority.

Our President has authority. While we may not agree with everything he does or says, he is still our (earthly) American Commander-in-Chief. We must support him in prayer. That is a Biblical mandate. Paul writes,

I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Sadly, the predictions coming out of Tuesday's election are that having gained control of the House of Representatives, the Democrats will now spend the next two years, essentially shutting down the government, as they wage their own uncivil war against the White House. Thus, while there were plenty of reasons in the past, even more so now, I am earnestly praying every morning for God to bring about a revival in our nation, and to guide our elected officials, to instill within them a spirit of cooperation and compromise so that we might once again become a nation that acknowledges our dependence upon God. **And if you are not now praying for our nation and leaders, then you need to ask yourself why you are not obeying God in this matter?**

Like him or not, Trump is our president and so deserves our prayers, but our ultimate commander-in-chief is the Lord Jesus Christ! (1 Corinthians 15:20-28)

[God] has put all things under [Christ's] feet and has made him the head over all things for the church
Ephesians 1:22

Listen to what Paul prayed that you and I might come to fully understand about Jesus Christ as our savior, Lord, and commander

*I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the **hope** to which he has called you, what are the **riches** of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his **power** for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And **He has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church**, Ephesians 1:17-22*

Since birthright has also been in the news lately, did you realize that as Christians, we have a double birthright which has granted us dual citizenship both in the United States of America and in the kingdom of God. We still owe allegiance to support and defend our country, but we owe an even higher allegiance to Christ our savior.

Why should we privilege our allegiance to Jesus Christ over our national loyalty? Because even though we were born in this country we are only going to live here for a small portion of our life. When we were born again we gained both eternal life and residence in God's kingdom. This world is not our home; we are just passing through. Thus we have been instructed

in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord.

Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you.

1 Peter 3:15

2. Jesus Christ is our ultimate commander and chief, WE NEED TO LISTEN TO HIM! And because we are in a spiritual war, we need to engage the enemy with spiritual weapons on a spiritual field of battle.

An old deacon who would pray every Wednesday night at prayer meeting always concluded his prayer the same way: "*And, Lord, clean all the cobwebs out of my life.*"

This got to be too much for one fellow in the prayer meeting who had heard the old deacon one time too often. So when next the deacon made that

prayer, the other fellow jumped to his feet and shouted: "Lord, forget the cobwebs! Kill the spider!"

Too often we focus on the cobwebs in our life instead of what caused those cobwebs, the real enemy, Satan. We may be "set apart" by Christ and sealed by God's Holy Spirit, but Satan is sitting right outside our door, waiting for his next opportunity to attack. In this spiritual war, we fight against him by donning spiritual armor: the secure helmet of our assured salvation, the shield of faith to deflect his darts and lies, the belt of truthfulness, the breastplate of Christ's righteousness, wielding the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, and always being ready to take to our feet with the Gospel (Ephesians 6:12-17).

This then is our battle strategy: to put on the full armor of Christ so that we will be able to stand on the fateful day that we are attacked by our ancient enemy; we do this by bringing in the big guns of prayer, Bible study, church involvement, giving, serving, etc. Here are our marching orders:

Be self-controlled and alert.
Your enemy the devil prowls around
like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.
Resist him, standing firm in the faith,
I Peter 5:8-9

because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings." I Peter 5:8-9

Jesus is our commander, holy and joyous living is our strategy for defeating the enemy. WE FIGHT THE ENEMY BY LIVING OUT OUR FAITH IN OUR LIFE!

3. Finally, We need to FIGHT TO THE END.

Jesus concluded his prophecy about the end of our age saying,

because of the increase of lawlessness,
the love of many will grow cold.
But the one who endures to the end
will be saved. This good news of [God's] kingdom
will be proclaimed throughout the world ...
then the end will come.
Matthew 24:12-14

When Forrester joined the Army, I found it amazing – and I am sure that so did he – that this boy who could barely get out of bed in time for school, was now waking

every day at 5a.m. and exercising by 6, before starting a full day of work. Army life was 24/7 for him - not 9:00 to 5:00."

Neither is the Christian life a matter of just coming to church on Sunday morning and then forgetting all about our faith the rest of the week. It's 24/7.

Brothers and sisters, we have been saved by God's grace through our faith in the victory that Christ has already accomplished for us. Now as members of the body of Christ, we are called to fight to the finish in the spiritual war that is going on all around us, not to sit and gripe about what we don't like in life or in the church.

Early in WW2, after the miraculous rescue of British forces off the beaches of Dunkirk by a voluntary, largely civilian navy using any craft that could cross the Channel, Churchill rallied Britain with his most memorable speech:

"We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender."

Because the British didn't surrender, and because the U.S. saw that it too needed to enter into that war, the world is quite a different and I hope a better place than what it might have been. Yes other wars still continue, but who could imagine what our world would be like today, had the Allied Forces not fought to the end of WW2; until Victory.

The same is true for us. We will be part of that spiritual war to end all wars until such time as Christ returns or calls us home. At the end of his life, the now old Apostle Paul summarized his life: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"* (II Timothy 4:7).

Have we? Will we? Will we 'til our dying day?

The British philosopher, John Stuart Mill, wrote: *"War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight is a miserable creature..."*

There are some things are worth fighting for: our freedom in America and our freedom in Christ! We are still fighting the war to end all wars, may we always obey our heavenly commander, be prepared for the battle before us, and fight until we gain the victory in this life for the next.

Let's pray about this.