

9-13-26

Christian Fighting Tactics

Psalm 35: 1 – 10a

I was reminded of an old 1980's movie the other day after I read the first verse of Psalm 35: *"Contend, O Lord with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me."*

The title of the movie is "My Bodyguard" Maybe you've seen it. It's the story of a high school boy whose family recently moved from Cincinnati to Chicago because of his father's new job as a hotel manager.

Since it's the beginning of a new school year, the movie focuses in on the ups and downs of this boy's life as he navigates the challenges of being the new kid at school.

Almost immediately, the bully of the school seeks to educate his new classmate about the rules concerning his turf: "Hey, punk, there's a really mean dude in this school and if you want to stay safe, you'd better pay for my protection. It'll only cost you a quarter a day."

Remember this was 1980. In today's monetary terms we'll have to consider cost of living adjustment and inflation. Let's make it an even 5 dollars.

Well, as you might guess, the young man is unnerved by this bully's display of machoism but not enough to give in to his demands and pay the extortion money. So, the bully and his cohorts gradually ratchet up their pressure on him –

tripping him in the cafeteria

filling his gym locker full of garbage and ruining his clothes

delivering cheap shots during PE class

– Basically, making his school life completely intolerable.

But all this dramatically changes one day when the newcomer is able to secure the services of another classmate, convincing him to be his bodyguard – and he isn't just another classmate. He's a full- sized grown adult male, even if he still is a highschooler!

He probably stands 6' 4" and weighs 220 - intimidating in his own right, especially to his classmates.

It now appears that the tables have turned, and the bully and his gang will have to shrink back and play nice. But it's not to be...

The bully hires his own bodyguard, and things rapidly escalate.

I don't want to spoil the ending for you, but suffice it to say, a good old fashion rumble is in order before the credits finally roll.

In Psalm 35 David is asking God to be his bodyguard:

"God, fight those who are fighting against me."

Come to my rescue!

Be my bodyguard!

And in verse 2 and 3, David doubles down on his request asking God not only to be his defense, but to also take the offensive:

"Brandish spear and javelin" – Show my enemies you mean business!

So, we can see right away that in Psalm 35 David is very serious and adamant about what he wants God to do for him:

He wants his enemies vanquished and he wants God to lead the charge.

But beyond David's initial request, I think I see some principles for fighting the Christian way or what we could call Christian fighting tactics.

Now, some of you might be surprised by this thought and wonder ...

Pastor, aren't Christian fighting tactics an oxymoron?

Christians are to be gentle, loving, and kind. We're not supposed to fight. Are we?

We're supposed to turn the other cheek, lay down our weapons, and even our lives? Right?

After all, isn't this what Jesus taught his disciples when the soldiers came to arrest him, and someone drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant?

In that moment, didn't Jesus say that *"anyone who draws the sword will die by the sword."*

Well, he certainly did say that, but maybe Jesus was referring to more than just that particular moment.

Maybe Jesus was commenting on a person's overall way of life.

Maybe he's saying that a life characterized and consumed by violence and bloodshed will beget violence, bloodshed and death.

And if this is so – which I think it is - then I don't think this incident translates to God's prohibition for the Christian to not engage in fighting, especially when the fight is with the forces of evil that seek to destroy that which is good and honorable, godly, and right.

In other words, fighting is not out of the question for Christians. Instead, we need to learn how to fight.

In the case of Jesus giving himself up to the soldiers, he knew that his arrest was his Heavenly Father's plan, and it would lead to his bodily sacrifice which would in turn lead to paying the price for humanity's sins, which would open the door of forgiveness for mankind which

would in turn defeat the forces of evil and death and pave the way to eternal life for all who believe.

So, Jesus was far from throwing in the towel or waving the white flag of surrender when he went to the cross. Instead, he **counter-attacked** in a shocking and unconventional way that no one ever saw coming except God himself.

So, while his enemies were gloating in their supposed victory, Christ came back to life and secured our victory over death.

Christ fought with every fiber of his being to do the Father's will and carry out his assignment to be the perfect sacrifice and win for us the greatest victory imaginable!

This is what Paul specifically writes about in Romans 8:

"What then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies ...

Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and interceding for us ... In all things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

You see, not only did God fight for us at the cross by vanquishing our greatest enemies - sin and death – He continues to fight for us right now, right here – in this present moment because he is praying for us - interceding on our behalf before his Father.

We have no greater advocate than Jesus Christ our Lord.

He's in our corner.

He is our warrior, and he will not lose the battle.

I admit that I don't think about this as much as I should. A lot of times I forget that God is fighting for me, and when I forget, I suppose this is when I will cower from a fight, fail to engage, because I've forgotten that God is leading me in to battle.

So, I think this is principle #1 that we must keep in mind as we enter the battle against what Paul described in Ephesians 6 as *"the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."* - namely, that **we must not go alone.**

We cannot go alone, or we will be doomed

We take God with us – or better yet, God leads us into battle because he's obviously stronger, wiser, and more powerful than we are and because he fights for us, and he will never be defeated.

Isn't this a comforting thought?

Sure, we must first recognize that we are in a spiritual battle - and this thought alone can cause us to have great anxiety and concern, but when we counter the first thought with the second – that God fights for his children and never loses, we draw courage and strength and hope.

Amen?

I hope you're finding hope and strength and courage in this message today.

One of the things that can trouble me is that sometimes I get the impression that Christians don't see themselves in a spiritual battle or don't see this country in a spiritual battle.

I think, for whatever reason, they want to turn a blind eye to this reality and instead think that it's just due to unfortunate circumstances that there seems to be a lot of powerful people in highly influential positions that mean well, and are quite possibly very well-intentioned, but are

just misguided and ignorant – and certainly there are those types of people out there, and they can do real damage to society – I was one of them once - but these aren't the ones we have to be cautious of and fight against.

The ones we have to worry about are those who deliberately want to destroy our faith, our church, our families and our constitutionally-run government –

and maybe they want to do it because of greed or power

or maybe because they're bored and this endeavor brings some sort of significance to their lives - I don't know – but I do know that the dark forces of evil take great pleasure and great advantage of people like these and enlist them to do their dirty, insidious and destructive work.

And so, I suppose principle #2 is this:

As Christians, **we need to be clear-eyed and honest about the situation in which we find ourselves.**

And this can be tough.

We want to think the best of people.

We dread the thought that someone we personally know or are related to are being influenced or deceived by dark forces.

But if we fail to at least consider this possibility, we may be leaving our friend or family member extremely vulnerable and in a terrible heap of trouble.

In other words, it does no good to take a knife to a gun fight. Spiritual battles must be waged with spiritual weapons.

David cries out to God to bring shield and buckler – a buckler is another type of a shield - but also says, hey God, bring your spear and javelin too.

David understands the type of war he is waging – its seriousness and what's potentially at stake.

Do we understand what's at stake?

– that when certainly policies are made or others ignored, it's done for a greater, more evil purpose in mind?

Think back on our country's open-border policy. Maybe open borders wasn't about helping the poor get a better life, but actually the opposite - increasing America's population of indentured servants to serve the rich.

Maybe abortion is more about promoting a culture of death and devaluing human life than it is about protecting a woman's reproductive rights.

Maybe letting transgenders choose the bathroom of their liking has nothing to do with individual rights but has everything to do with blurring the lines of a what a traditional family is supposed be so that the destruction of the family unit will be hastened along.

Maybe in the schools, drawing attention to a child's skin color and race isn't about celebrating diversity, but about driving wedges between young students so that they will be indoctrinated into tribal warfare at a young and tender age.

And so, this is why I appreciate what David prays next – remember the book of Psalms is the Hebrew's prayer book – He prays ... *"Say to my soul, 'I am your salvation.'"*

What is David saying – I mean praying?

I think this:

God, I enter the battle – and not just the battle - I enter life not just with you, but in you – by faith!

You are my purpose for living.

You're the reason I can still laugh and stay calm in the presence of my enemies.

You have given me everything I need to live and prosper and flourish.

One of my all-time favorite scriptures comes out of 2 Peter 1: 3 – 4: *"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

Do you hear what Peter says?

There is only one way to escape the corruption of this world and this is to become a new creation.

This is what happens when we "participate in the divine nature"

God says to each of us ... "You want a piece of me?"

Well, you got it. Believe in my Son and My Holy Spirit will reside in you.

This is the only way we can participate in the divine nature.

It's not by dabbling in church or joining a Christian chat room.

It's by getting down on our knees

acknowledging the Creator who made us

recognizing his legitimate authority over our lives

and confessing our sins

asking him for forgiveness and ...

asking him to be what David prayed: *"Say to my soul, 'I am your salvation.'"*

When this experience happens to you, you'll be ready for anything.

You'll be able to fight the good fight because you'll know beyond a shadow of doubt that God has, is, and always will fight for you.

Amen.