

CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES OF PASSIVITY

Part 1 – The Battlefield

Introduction

- The Treaty of Versailles was entered into after World War I. The Treaty contained many provisions, chief among these was creating a demilitarized zone in the Rhineland, which was a 31-mile strip of land on the banks of the Rhine between France and Germany. The Versailles peace makers carved it out and forbid Germany from putting troops or building fortifications there.
- The Versailles Treaty also limited Germany's military which had reached almost 2 million troops during World War I – and the Treaty reduced it to just 100,000.
 - There were other limits including an officer corps reduced to 4,000.
 - The number of weapons were limited.
 - Germany could only manufacture new war material in a few factories that had to be approved by the allies.
 - Germany had to turn over vast amounts of equipment, from tanks to machine guns to telephones.
 - The Treaty reduced Germany's naval forces to a skeleton that included 6 battle ships, 6 light cruisers, 12 destroyers and 12 torpedo boats and totally eliminated the submarine fleet that had terrorized ships in the Atlantic.
- Should the German troops enter the Rhineland under any pretext, the Agreement provided they would be guilty of a “unprovoked act of aggression” and the other European powers bound by the Treaty including France, Britain, Belgium and Italy would not only have the right, but the duty to expel the Germans from the Rhineland by force.

- In March of 1933 – 14 years after World War I and six years before World War II - British intelligence had confirmed that the Nazis had over 400,000 storm troopers in uniform. England and France were aware the Treaty of Versailles was being violated.
- In 1933 the British Ambassador in Berlin sent the Foreign Office in Britain a lengthy assessment of Hitler's regime saying that it was intensely anti-Jewish and brought out the worse traits in German character. He said that Jews were being "systematically removed from their posts" from the civil service because of the "accident of race". Youths were being enrolled in infantry programs, boys under 16 were subject to military training and pilots were being recruited for the Luftwaffe – all in open defiance of the Versailles treaty.
- The most incredible acts of all were that social democrats, communists and critics of Nazi policy were being seized and sent to large concentration camps – particularly near Munich – (Dachau) – which was large enough to hold 5,000 prisoners. (Photo of Dachau)
- Three years later, on March 7, 1936, (the day was a Saturday and Hitler knew the British Government leaders would be relaxing at their country estates away from London) 22,000 of Adolf Hitler's German troops invaded the Rhineland on March 7, 1936 and Hitler addressed the Reichstag that day and told the German people that the German Reich no longer felt "bound" by Versailles and established from that day the absolute unrestricted sovereignty of the Reich to the Rhineland.
- German War Minister Blomberg, General Fritsch and General Beck and a handful of other senior members of the Army hierarchy in Germany were convinced that Nazi Germany would collapse within a week or less of the invasion of the Rhineland.
- Why? In deciding to invade the buffer zone Hitler had acted in defiance of their advice. They knew that France could retake the Rhineland in a matter of hours because they outnumbered the troops Hitler put there by 10 to 1.

They believed that with the first glimpse of a French bayonet, the troops would make a “hasty retreat” back across the Rhine.

- They believed that if this occurred, it would be the end of Adolf Hitler. They all believed that France was committed, by a treaty Hitler had approved, to take military action against the presence of German troops and to demilitarize the zone. The moment the French infantry moved by calling the bluff, that same treaty required Britain to support France with her own armed forces and the fledgling German army would be routed. Hitler and his Nazis would be the laughingstock of Europe, and once the German people realized that they had been betrayed, a military government would move into the Reich Chancellery pending a constitutional convention and free elections.
- Ten years after the invasion of the Rhineland, General Alfred Jodel (Yodel), who became Hitler’s Chief-of-Staff during World War II, testified before the Nuremberg tribunal that they knew the French divisions near the frontier would have blown the German divisions to pieces and Germany would have had to retreat.
- What was the British and French response to the Treaty violations? They did nothing. They cried peace at any cost.
- The consequences to the world: Catastrophic. Britain and France were guilty of acquiescing to German aggression and the consequences of French and British inertia resulted in ---11 million civilian deaths in Europe, 8.8 million dead in Germany, 450,000 deaths in Great Britain, and 24,000,000 deaths in the U.S.S.R.
- All because men’s hearts failed them.
 - Determining not to take a stand – they stood weak.
 - Determining not to be engaged – they coasted.
 - Determining not to be disciplined – they failed to take the threat seriously and drifted into passivity instead.

- We can only faintly imagine what the world would look like today had World War II not happened.
- But it did happen, and the historical failure of the leaders of that era have been chronicled as an example for us today culturally – and I believe there are spiritual lessons to learn as well.

There are all sorts of cultural parallels we can draw from this catastrophic failure in our world's history, but:

1. The aim and goal of this Sunday and next is to draw out scriptural principles so that the trajectory of your spiritual life will change – even if you think you are in a good place in your spiritual growth. “There is no such thing as standing still.” There is always a higher level from where we are today and we need the Word of God to transform our thinking every day of our lives so that we are in pursuit of that higher ground in our faith journey.
 - Ephesus 4:1, I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you the walk in a manner worthy of the calling. . . walk = daily conduct
 - Everyday can be a new advance in your walk – a fresh word from God and revelation of who God is.
2. The second aim and goal is to alert you to (or remind you of) the fact that we are in a constant spiritual battle on our journey to higher spiritual ground.
 - Its like playing the game of basketball. You are trying to score, and someone is always trying to take the ball away or block your shot.
3. This message is designed to emphasize that the main tactics of our enemy in this war are deception, doubt, discouragement and despair.

- When you feel those flaming arrows coming at you, call on the Lord by faith – and He will strengthen you.
4. Therefore, we need to be armed in readiness with an offensive plan so that we can engage effectively in our mission fields and in this faith family so that we will not live defeated spiritual lives – which is the main goal of our enemy.
- So many in the church today are either wounded, misinformed, or unbroken and their growth is stunted.
 - The prayer meeting is dead or dying. By our attitude to prayer we tell God that what was begun in the spirit we can finish in the flesh.
5. Lastly, although I've given you a verbal description today of what that failure looks like from our history of men who's passivity created one of the last century's most catastrophic wars, to heighten your awareness visually so that you can draw spiritual parallels in your own lives, I want to encourage you to watch the movie Greyhound, which stars Tom Hanks.
- There is no day off in war.

Review of I Peter

- Dave has been preaching through 1 Peter. A few weeks ago he reminded us of some of the content of 1 Peter which exhorts us to abide in Christ. He said that the pattern of life of the Christian is to obey and keep the Commandments of God. We are called to be like Jesus – doers of the Word. A Christian will be transformed and submit to God as King, and this is how we reflect the beauty of Christ in our lives.
- In 1 Peter 1:13 the Word says, “Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

As we exegete 1 Peter 1:13 we see the following:

We need to make a deliberate choice.

We can't be passive.

We need to think and captivate our thoughts; concentrate and eliminate distractions so that the Holy Spirit can use our minds to help us along (Psalm 23) the “paths of righteousness” and to help us to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18)

We have to be engaged: We can't be carefree. We can't coast.

We have to cultivate a sober spirit. A seriousness about life.

Be on the alert. Be decisive and thoughtful like the men of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32) who had understanding and discernment of God's will for the times within which they lived. They knew what Israel should do. They were leaders. They were with their families.

Discipline our minds and thank the Lord for the discipline because it comes from Him.

But the key is to understand it is not in our own strength:

Ephesians 6:10 says, “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” We can’t live this way, but Jesus can live this way through us if we will die daily to ourselves so He can live in and through us. As David said last week, “We need God’s power to do God’s work in God’s way.”

We’re going to be examining 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 today and next week. We will introduce the context this week (which is the battlefield) and dive into the teaching on how to engage in the battle (and the consequences of failure) in more detail next Sunday.

Why does Paul call the church in Ephesians 6 to be strong in the Lord? Because he knew then what we know today, which is that throughout life we are constantly at war and are wrestling with “Powers . . . world forces of this darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

As I said, this week the focus will be on the battlefield and context of where we all live life, while next week we’ll focus on what life changes we may need to make in order to spiritually navigate the journey.

C.S. Lewis, in mere Christianity, wrote these words:

Enemy – occupied territory – that is what this world is . . . when you go to church, you are really listening in to the secret wireless from our friends: that is why the enemy is so anxious to prevent us from going.

There is no doubt in my mind that COVID19 is from the pit of Hell – all designed to destroy and disrupt the work of the church around the world – to keep people from fellowship and worship of God. 53% of American adults said in a recent poll their mental health has been negatively impacted due to worry and stress over COVID19. They are sleeping less, drinking more, eating more with worsening chronic conditions.

Churches in many states have been forced to close and many are in litigation today as State Governments have banned church gatherings while allowing

protests and gambling establishments to gather at will. The pressure on the faith community has been turned up and persecution is real.

Sinclair Ferguson: The whole of the demonic forces of Satan are unleashed on the believer who trusts in the blood of Christ for forgiveness and remission of sins.

Let's look at several scriptures that give us a view of the Battlefield:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4: And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

He's blinding unbelievers now and most in our culture are dead in their trespasses and sins – so we need to be praying that the Lord will open blind eyes!

1 Peter 5:8: Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (Lion is strong metaphor for the strength and destruction of the Devil.)

The word for Devil in the Greek means slanderer. As John MacArthur says in his MacArthur study Bible, "He and his forces are always active, looking for opportunities to overwhelm the believer with temptation, persecution, and discouragement. Satan sows discord, accuses God to men, men to God, and men to men. He will do what he can to drag the Christian out of fellowship with Christ and out of Christian service. And he constantly accuses believers before God's throne, attempting to convince God to abandon them."

- The Devil goes to Church by David Butts

2 Corinthians 2:10-11: But whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

Satan attacks the believer's mind. One of his most devious devices is to convince us not to forgive one another. (Unforgiving or critical spirit.)

One of the commandments Paul gives the Ephesian church in Ephesians 4:31-5:1 is "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children."

We are most like God when we forgive. And Satan doesn't want us to imitate God.

In a recent blog on The Desiring God website Marshall Segal says, "Much of our confusion and misery in life is due to our underestimating (or ignoring altogether) the enemy of our souls." Segal goes on to say that, "Do you want to know what Satan's schemes are? He wants you to hold a grudge. He wants you to believe vengeance is yours, and not God's. Forgiveness outwits Satan, and forgiveness subverts his wickedness."

Segal continues "Satan loathes forgiveness. Revelation 12:10 says that he is the accuser of the brethren and since "accuser is who he is, forgiveness is his sworn enemy. Forgiveness contradicts his existence. Forgiveness defies his life's work. To him, forgiveness is hostility."

Jesus placed a high priority on forgiveness. In His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:23-24, "If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar and there remember that you brother has something against you, leave your

offering there before the alter; first go your way and be reconciled to your brother; then, come and present your offering.”

Feel free to leave the service now if you would like; or, make plans right now as to what you need to do to be reconciled to your brother or sister, and execute on that plan – and defeat Satan’s plans.

Satan uses any device to sow doubt, discouragement, despair, division and he is deceptive in how he accomplishes it all. 2 Corinthians 11:14 says Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

His activity is also illustrated in the book of Acts from chapter 6 and following: the devil started attacking the church as thousands were being added to the church and the tools he used were disunity (Ananias and Saphira); distraction (trouble caused because the Greek widows needs weren’t being met); and distress (Saul of Tarsus was killing Christians).

There’s one last passage concerning the battlefield that I want you to see in the event you think you can be exempt. Matthew 16:21-23 – “from that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised upon the third day. Verse 22: And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” Verse 23, But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interest, but man’s”

Jesus rebukes Peter because of the doubt he casts on Jesus’ mission, and the deception he sows in trying to stop the work of God.

If Satan can put his thoughts into Peter, who spent three years under the direct teaching of Jesus, what do you suppose he can do with you -- or those in the church who do not practice the spiritual disciplines that make growth possible (prayer, Bible study, worship, meditation and scripture memory).

Bumper sticker: Don’t Believe Everything You Think.

Proverbs 18:21 – Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

Proverbs 15:1 – A gentle answer turns away wrath – how many churches, workplaces, relationships and marriages has the tongue destroyed?

James 1:19 – But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. John Wayne: short on mouth/long on ears.

R.C. Sproul - Three things cause divorce: sex, money and the tongue.

Satan puts a bulls eye on all Christian marriages because they represent Christ's relationship with His bride the church.

What Does the Spiritual Battlefield Look Like?

Our enemy is not people but Satan, the world system and our own sinful, fallen flesh.

The battlefield is primarily in the mind – and there is a constant barrage to:

- Get us not to worship God – whether alone or with other believers;
 - Lulled into mediocrity. There is no such thing as standing still spiritually.
- Blind us to the truth;
 - Open war is upon us. Remember: victory is ours in Christ. British – French.
- Discourage us and get us to doubt God and His promises;
- Take vengeance in our own hands and not forgive others;
 - Romans 12 – we are not to be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.
- Accuse one another and create discontent and disunity;
 - Pray and ask the Lord to set a watch over your mouth.
- Tear other people down rather than encourage and build one another up.
 - Make a plan this week and think of thoughtful and kind words you can say to someone.

In the book, “The Dead and Those About to Die”, John McManus tells the true story of the 1st Infantry Division’s D-Day assault on Omaha Beach during World War II. Colonel George Taylor tells the men pinned down on the beach “that there are only two kinds of men on the beach: the dead and those who are going to die. Now get moving.”

I end today by exhorting you to walk the worthy walk of FAITH – now get moving by the power God supplies!

Paul gives 5 military style commands to the Corinthian church. They are to:

Be on the alert.

Stand firm in the faith.

Act like men.

Be strengthened.

Let all that you do be done in love.