

What does it mean to win? In sports it means that you outperform or outscore the opposition. In the military it means that you impose your will on or gain ground from the enemy. But what does it mean for the Christian embroiled in daily spiritual battles against the Devil and his minions?

Certainly, as Christians we are all aware of the fact that ultimate and final victory, that is victory over sin and death, has already been achieved by the work of Christ. But what does it mean to be victorious in the day in day out dogfights against demonic powers?

The answer can be found in 2 Timothy 2:4. "No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the recruiter." And how do we please the recruiter? We obey the Lord.

What does it take to win? Visit any locker room, talk to any coach or military leader, or read any self-help book and you will find man's ideas on the keys to winning.

However, as Christians, our source for winning strategies should come from God and his word. So what does he have to say?

2 Tim. 2:4 - No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the recruiter.

Hebrews 12:1-2 - Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith . . .

1 Corinthians 9:25, 27 - Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. However, they do it to receive a crown that will fade away, but we a crown that will never fade away. . . Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Philippians 3:13-14 - But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 2:5 - Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

What are the rules of spiritual warfare?

Ephesians 6:10-18 - Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared

everything, to take your stand.

Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. In every situation take the shield of faith, and with it you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word. Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:14

I. Suiting Up For Battle

A. Belt of Truth

1. Historical Portrait
 - a) Girding one's loins
 - (1) Cinching up loose clothing that could easily be grabbed or cause hindrances
2. Heavenly Precept
 - a) Readiness for battle/action
 - (1) Exodus 12:11
 - (2) Luke 12:35
 - (3) 1 Peter 1:13
 - b) Removal of entanglements
 - (1) Hebrews 12:1
 - (2) 2 Timothy 2:4a
 - (3) Ephesians 4:14
 - (4) 1 Timothy 4:1
3. Here and Now Practicality
 - a) Knowledge of God's truth prevents us from getting entangled in the false rhetoric of the world
 - b) Living a life of truth prevents us from the charge of hypocrisy

B. Breastplate of Righteousness

1. Historical Portrait
 - a) Protecting heart and stomach (vital organs)
2. Heavenly Precept
 - a) Protecting one's mind and emotions
 - (1) Satan wants to attack both
 - (a) Read from John MacArthur Commentary: Ephesians. p. 351
3. Here and Now Practicality
 - a) Righteous living results in joy (Ps. 45:7; 68:3)
 - b) Righteous living produces fruit (Phil. 1:10-11)

- c) Righteous living glorifies God
- d) Righteous living brings blessings (Prov. 10:6)