

The Old Paths

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“Spirituality Versus Carnality”

Jarrod Jacobs

I am amazed to see the lifestyle of those in the Middle East. There are businesses, governments, and families in a “war zone.” These folks have lived this way for centuries. The current fighting between Israel and Lebanon is nothing new. In fact, we find various scrimmages taking place among these people all the way back to Old Testament days! David knew war (I Chron. 28:3), Abraham knew war (Gen. 14:14-17), Moses knew war (Ex. 17:8-16, etc.), as did many others in the Bible.

In the Middle East, children are brought up to fire guns at enemies. They are being brought up to hate others to the point of strapping bombs on to themselves and then walking into a crowd in order to kill many. Yes, it is a “war zone”!

Yet, how many people have spent time in such places? How many Americans, British, Spanish, Germans, etc., have gone over to these places and traded in their stores, slept in their hotels, and ate their food? People have gone over and swam in the Dead Sea, as if there was no fighting taking place! Yes, we may recognize that soldiers stand guard, but when folks become “caught up” in the culture and certain sites, they almost forget that a war for a piece of land has been waged for centuries, and continues to be waged today. If you don't believe these statements are true, then think back this week to the pic-

tures of those who were evacuated from Beirut of all places, in order to keep them safe from the mortars and bomb blasts!

Even closer to home, it amazes me to see folks going on with their lives as if we are not engaged in a war for freedom from terrorism and tyranny! To some, September 11, 2001 might as well have happened 1000 years ago for no more thought than they give to that infamous date. It is sad that many are becoming indifferent to the day when over 3000 people died as innocents at the hand of Muslims who hate us.

What has this to do with Christians? As I think upon the fighting taking place in Palestine, Lebanon, as well as the war in which this country is engaged, I see a close parallel that can be drawn. Let me present it by asking a question. **“How many of us have forgotten that there is a WAR taking place for our souls right now??”**

Satan is our enemy (I Pet. 5:8). He is ever-vigilant in his efforts to take precious souls away from God. Sadly, there are people who are working in his service, and they are using their words and influence to bring more souls to him. We see this on a daily basis as we are “bombarded” (a military word) with images, words, and acts that are based upon men following their own lusts rather than God's will (Jas. 1:14-15). Of course, we know that when folks follow their own lusts instead of God's will, it leads to their spiritual death! Why then would we want to go with them?

Yet, many do!

Have we become calloused and insensitive to the war going on around us — the war for our very souls? I am afraid some people have! I know of Christians who are guilty of using “cuss” words, and euphemisms in their speech. Some Christians will tell dirty/off-color jokes, while others speak lies, or “half-truths” as it is often called. These are things the world does, and are words condemned by God (Eph. 4:25; 5:3-4). Yet, instead of being in conflict with the world, Christians often encourage their brethren to “ease up” and not be so “judgmental.”

We also see this lack of vigilance in our actions. Christians are so enamored and enthralled by what the world offers, that we often forget that we are in conflict with the world. This results in people dressing immodestly (I Tim. 2:9-10), it results in divorce for unscriptural reasons (Matt. 5:32, 19:9), it results in conforming to the world (Rom. 12:2), and it also results in “vain” worship (Matt. 15:8-9)! God wants true worshippers to worship “in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:23-24), but this cannot be done when we are acting like the world!

God said that we can't be the world's friend and His friend at the same time (Jas. 4:4; Matt. 6:24; I Jn. 2:15). Yet, who among us has not tried it?? What is the result? It is not a closer walk with God, that is for sure! In fact, to try to “straddle the fence” results in our getting blisters! Let us remember that we have a choice to make in this life—God or Satan! We cannot walk around “oblivious” to the war that is going on for our souls! The apostle put it this way: *“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace”* (Rom. 8:6). Your mindset determines “life” or “death”. Who is winning the war for your soul?

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” (Jer. 6:16)

Our Members Write

“Saved By The Blood”

Dan Clark, Owensboro, KY

Recently I donated blood at the local blood center, as is often my practice. After the donation was complete, I began to think of the parallels of that practice and the blood of CHRIST. Don't get me wrong here, I am in no way trying to say that my blood can in any way save a person from hell. Only Christ's blood can save the soul. However, it can and does save lives. With the same commitment to the souls of men, I can assist in the saving of souls just as did the apostles. We can, as Christians, become fishers of men (Mark 1:17 - *“And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men”*). In this week's lesson let us explore this parallel.

GOD in his wisdom often places in the physical world types of the things that only exist in the spiritual realm. We can see this in the nation of Israel and it's relation to the spiritual Kingdom of God today (Romans 15:4 - *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope”*). The same is evident in the sacrifices of old and the sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10:1 - *“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect”*). In the case at hand, we can give our blood to save the physical lives of several people. This requires a concern for others and

a willingness to sacrifice for their benefit by the donor. Added to these facts are the necessity of having someone who is willing to supply that donated blood to those who are in need and the acceptance of the recipient in order for the desired outcome to take place.

If we look at this situation, we can see parallels with the spiritual realm. Christ had the concern and willingness to sacrifice his blood for us that our souls might be saved (Romans 5:8 - *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”*). Even with this great sacrifice for the souls of man, more is required. Someone must provide access to that blood by telling others of its existence and power (Mark 16:15 - *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”*). Finally, the lost must accept the blood. We cannot force them to do the right thing, nor can we accept the blood for them (Hebrews 5:9 - *“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”*). Just as with blood donation, only when all the requirements come together can the saving of all men occur. In this case, it is their souls that are saved and perhaps their bodies. Whereas with physical blood donation, only the bodies of a few men are saved and the soul is

left unaffected.

As I contemplated this parallel, I began to wonder if we are truly as committed to saving souls, as we are lives. When you drive down the street, you will see yard signs and billboards encouraging us to donate blood. The blood center often calls people at home to provide needed blood. Donors often wear shirts indicating the need for blood donation. This begs the question to us Christians; are we doing the same with Christ's blood? Why is it that our society is so concerned with saving the temporal lives of man's bodies, but has little concern for the eternal fate of his soul? In fact, there are those who try to prevent us from displaying Christian messages publicly. As Christians, we need to be advertising the need for the saving power of the blood of Christ. This requires a life that exemplifies a Christian and a willingness to tell others how we were saved; just as a blood donor wears a shirt from the blood center. The church can only do so much in the spread of the gospel, the rest comes down to us individuals to take up our cross and follow him (Matthew 16:24 - *“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”*). Let's do some good advertising in the coming days of our lives if we are so blessed by GOD.

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