



A MATTER OF FAITH

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There is a 19th century English hymn called "Onward, Christian Soldiers." The words were written by Sabine Baring-Gould and the music by Arthur Sullivan. The first verse is:

*Onward, Christian soldiers,
marching as to war,
with the cross of Jesus going
on before.
Christ, the royal Master,
leads against the foe;
forward into battle see his
banners go!*

One of the references that this hymn was inspired by was 2 Timothy 2 verses 3 and 4. "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please

his commanding officer." The hymn also draws inspiration from this passage found in Ephesians 6 verses

Our God given task is to love God and others.

10-18.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. There-

fore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that

comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."

There has been a huge misinterpretation of these verses. People who say they are followers of Christ have taken on the mentality that our enemy is flesh and blood. There is a battle raging between the Christians and those who are not. In the U.S., there is a struggle that has been named the "Culture War." Some, in the name of Jesus, are acting hostile and hateful to those who do not share their beliefs. There is an "Us versus Them" attitude that is anything but Jesus like.

When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, he said "Love God with all your heart, soul and mind and love your neighbor as yourself." When Jesus was asked "who our neighbors are?" he told the story of the "Good Samaritan." The point of the story was that everyone that we interact with is our neighbor and we are to love and care for them.

There are some churches that are bombastic and militaristic towards "outsiders." They have no love in them for people who they disagree with. They do not have the heart of Christ. They are only interested in propagating their ideas and manipulating people into buying into their system of belief. They are not a part of Christ's church. They are a cult. They are dead wrong. Jesus gave his followers a

task to do. We are to go into all the world and tell others about him. We are to live peacefully with and love the people that Jesus created whether they share our views on things or not.

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood. It is not about politics, nationalities, systems of government, right verses left, red verses blue, East verses West... etc.. Our God given task is to love God and others.

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