

Paul H. Dixon
Be at War: Part 1
circa 1979

Transcript

Paul H. Dixon:

Thank you, Dr. Jeremiah. Let's turn over to II Timothy chapter two and while you're turning today, I'd like to recommend some biographies as we continue thinking about successful Christian living, how to be a winner. I believe it's a challenge to us to study the lives of successful men, spiritually speaking. Warren Wiersbe has made the statement that he reads through the life and diary of Andrew Bonar once a year. If that man who reads probably more than anyone I know thinks that much of this book it's certainly well worth your reading one time, the life and diary of Andrew Bonar. Shadow of the Almighty is the life and testament of Jim Elliot, one of the young men who was martyred in Ecuador back in 1956. He died before he was 30 and reading about this young man and his dedication to Christ, especially during his college years would have to challenge every college student.

This is the only book that I find that is out of print, and yet I'm sure you could find it in the library. And I would expect that they will be bringing it out again in paperback very shortly. It's Borden of Yale, the account of a young man who lived back a number of years ago who was very wealthy. In fact, I believe he is connected to the Borden milk company and his dedication to Christ and how he went to the mission field and died really before he ever got to the field of his service. Again, a young man who only lived to be less than 30 years of age, and yet accomplished a great deal in that short span. Anything you can read on Charles Haddon Spurgeon regarding his life will be a challenge and a blessing. This is one of Day's books.

It's called the Shadow of the Broad Brim, biography of Spurgeon. I think you would all find it profitable to read Life of Hudson Taylor, and also to read his book called Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret written by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor. And then again, if you would read a biography of D. L. Moody, there's an excellent one written by his son. And again, Day has written one of Moody called Bush Aglow. So bear these in mind and we trust that you'll be reading, discipline yourself, set up a reading schedule, this coming summer. I recognize that most of you have plenty to do as far as assignments in reading now. When the summer time comes, be sure that you spend a lot of time furthering your walk with the Lord through reading.

In II Timothy chapter two, we've been thinking about the matter of success. I'm going to share some more thoughts with you on that in just a few minutes. I would like to make this announcement tonight at seven o'clock in the cafeteria, Pat and I have been invited to come and meet with the pastor's group and speaking on the subject of the role of an evangelist. And we'll also be talking about the evangelist in his home life, et cetera, be opening it up for questions. And so this is co-educational and all are invited to attend in the cafeteria tonight from seven o'clock until eight o'clock. In II Timothy chapter two, Paul said to Timothy, "Now, therefore my son be strong in the grace that's in Christ Jesus. And the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit that a faithful man who shall be able to teach others also." We started thinking about this matter of being a success and being a winner.

And in verse one, Paul is saying to Timothy, if you want to be a winner, you have to be on the winning team. You have to know for sure that you're saved. Number two in verse two, he says, Timothy, not only be on the winning team, but also be a witness spread the good news, "the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit out of faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." And now in verses 3 through 6, he's going to talk about being at war verse one, be on the winning team, verse two, be a witness verse 3 through 6, be at war. And when he speaks of the warfare in verse

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3 and 4, he talks about the warfare of the soldier; in verse 5, the warfare of the athlete; and in verse 6, the warfare of the farmer.

And we're going to spend today and tomorrow looking at these three illustrations of the Christian Battle. When we start thinking about a warfare, it appears to me that some Christians have not caught the impact of this, that there is a war on. During the Second World War it was common for people to walk around and any cry for austerity, anything that we might have to make in the way of a sacrifice was motivated by this: don't you know that there's a war on? In other words, when there's a war on, you're willing to do anything for the cause, that's the way it ought to be on this campus. There ought to be the sensation in the dormitory and in the classroom and in every one of our lives, that there's a war on, and that Cedarville College has caught the impact of that, perhaps more than any other campus in the entire state of Ohio.

I think some people have the idea that when you become a Christian, that the battle ceases, but in reality, it only begins when you become a Christian. I have little time for the evangelism today that says, "Come on, join up with us. We've got a great thing going, get saved and all your problems are over." That's a lie. When you get saved, your problems are just beginning because there are conflicts that take place within the Christian's life that are all part of Christian living. For instance, when you get saved the devil is certainly an enemy that all of us are going to have to contend with. We're going to have to do battle with the devil. That's why Paul said an Ephesians six, "We wrestle not against fleshing blood, but against principalities and wickedness and spiritual wickedness in high places."

And he talks about putting on the whole armor of God because of the conflict with the devil. Last night down at the church, one of our men brought a study on the devil. It was an unusual presentation, Buster McPheeters, who's just been saved now, well, not quite a year. And he took the position that he was the devil and he stood up there and approached us as how the devil would try to defeat the Grace Baptist Church. And he talked about how the devil would try to get us to stop praying, stop reading our Bibles, to stop witnessing and how he would try to break up the fellowship among the saints so that we could not bring honor and glory to Christ. I thought to myself that applies to this campus as well. The devil is against you, he's against this school, and we war against him.

There's a battle on, but not only is there a warfare when it comes to the devil also, when we think about the world. Perhaps we have the idea that because Cedarville College is located in a small rural community, that we have kind of a monastery here and that we are just isolated from the rest of the world and that we do not have the battles that other Christian perhaps might have with the world. Don't you believe it. There's plenty of the world in every one of us to permeate every dormitory and to permeate every classroom. There is enough worldliness, I'm confident right here in this chapel with on all of us to say that we all are doing battle with the world every day. It's a conflict. Let's face up to it. And then there's the warfare with the flesh. I recently was in meetings, not far from here and a young man came to Christ about 25 years of age. This was the first meeting of this year in January. He came to Christ on Thursday night and he told me after the service, he said, "Paul," he said, "I've had it with drugs." He said, "I've had it with my immorality." He said, "I've been thinking all week long before I ever came to this meeting, how there has to be more to life than this." And he came back the next night and brought his brother. And when the invitation was given, his brother came forward and on Sunday night, he was back with his brother and his brother's wife and they were all in the very front row. Well, they're taking it all in. And after the service, they came up to me said, "We got to talk to you." They all had some questions, but this guy, I believe his name was Gary. He's a big fella, a real great personality. He said, "Paul," he said, "What I can't understand," he said, "I got saved Thursday," and he said, "Boy," he said, "I've been having all kinds of churnings going on inside." He said, "I thought that my desire for the drugs and everything else," he said, "I thought it would be over with when I got saved," but he says, "I find that

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I'm drawn back to these things and I'm having a struggle." And I was able to take him to Romans chapter 7 and then show him that there's a civil war that goes on inside the Christian. It's a battle all the time between the flesh and the spirit. And I don't care whether you've been a Christian for five years, five months or for 20 years. The point is we are at war all of the time.

Sometime I have had people to say to me, "Paul, don't expect the same spiritual fervor at Cedarville College, as you would find at some of your Bible institutes." And the reasoning they use with me is that don't you know that at Cedarville College, it's a liberal art school. And therefore at a liberal arts school, that is saying it has to be more worldly minded and that therefore those who are studying for business and those who are studying for teaching and those who are going into science and into law, that they would not be as spiritually minded as someone who is going into the ministry. I want to fight at that. I don't buy it. I don't believe it. I believe that everyone, I don't care what field we're going into, oughta want to be victorious and successful. And I believe that the spiritual fervor at Cedarville College can be as great or greater than any campus in America, no matter what they're focusing their attention upon in full-time Christian service. How are we going to be victorious in the conflict?

I believe that Paul is telling us something in verse three and four, when he talks about the warfare of the soldier, we'll talk about the athlete and the farmer tomorrow. But today I want us to lock in to what the soldier can instruct us about. The soldier teaches us dedication. You're taking notes, and I see many of you are, you have Roman numeral three, be it war, and you're going to have A soldier, B athlete, C farmer, and next to A soldier put dedication. "Now therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that wareth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who had chosen him to be a soldier."

I want you to notice that word entangled. You might put out there by the side of it, weaved in. When I think of something that's entangled, I think that something that accidentally happened, like when I'm out fishing, sometimes my line gets tangled up. That monofilament gets all knotted up. That's entangled, accidentally. But when I think of something that's weaved in, I think of something that's systematically done and it looks all right, but it shouldn't be there. And I want you to get an illustration that'll help this to begin to sink in. The Greek had no standing army and Timothy has a Greek background. And as Paul is writing to Timothy, challenging him to be a professional soldier, to endure the hardness for the cause of Christ in the midst of the day of persecution, he was living in. He says, "No man that wareth entangleth himself, is weaved into the affairs of this life."

How did they fight if they didn't have any standing army? Here's a guy out plowing in the field. All of a sudden the word comes, there's a battle on, you know what that guy did? He dropped his plow and he ran out to face the enemy and he would get his weapon as he would run out there in his farmer's clothing to get out there, and to link hands with the rest of the Greeks, to defeat the foe. There's a guy and he's running in a race, in the Olympic race perhaps, out on the Greek race track. And all of a sudden the word comes, there's a war on. He doesn't even finish the race. He just runs right off of the track and goes out to the front line.

There's a fellow at home and he is eating and he has a bite of steak and he's bringing it up to his mouth. And all of a sudden the word comes, there's a war on. He drops his fork and he runs out to the front line. You see, he does not get so weaved into the common, ordinary, mundane things of this life that he can't fight the battle. I think for most of us, we've totally missed what worldliness is. For most of us, we have had in our minds ingrained the big six. You know what I mean?

We have it all figured out that the truly spiritual Christian doesn't dance, doesn't go to the movies, doesn't smoke, doesn't gamble, doesn't curse, doesn't drink. And so, because we don't do these things, we consider the fact that we are spiritual, we are not worldly, we have arrived, and that's the extent of our thinking regarding worldliness. I want you to know, I'm against all of those things. We ought to have

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convictions in our lives, but that is not the extent of worldliness. Worldliness is anything that stands between you and your God. Anything. Worldliness can be something that is legitimate. It can be something that's reasonable. And yet you get it all out of sorts, all out of balance. You see it's this entire world system. For instance, some of you are becoming weaved in to home and what's back there at home. Some of you have considered leaving school and going home because you miss your parents, or you miss your buddies in high school.

You miss that house and all those nice things that go with it and that comfortable living. And some of you are about at the point that you ready to pack up everything and go home because you're weaved in to what's back there in Pennsylvania or New York or another part of the state of Ohio or Michigan. Right?

I had a guy come to me last week, western. He said, "Paul, I'm not coming back school next quarter." I said, "You're not?" He said, "No." I said, "Why?" He said, "Well," he said, "You see, all my buddies in high school." He said, "I've got it all figured out. If I'm ever going to see them again, they're going to get scattered all over the country, if I'm ever going to see him again, I'd better get home right now, before they leave town." He had done some serious thinking about that. He was weaved in. We get locked in to something like that. Get thinking about home all the time, get homesick. And you can't get involved in the warfare. It's about time. We decided we're going to grow up and we're going to be a professional mature soldier because there's a battle raging.

Of course, there's some that get locked into a job. I couldn't begin to tell you, I have visited schools all across this country. I couldn't tell you how many people live in Chattanooga right now, who went to Tennessee Temple to prepare for the ministry. And they got a good job. And they decided why take the risk in the ministry? And they left some part of the country only to move to Chattanooga and they're living now working there and never fulfilled the will of God for their lives. Same thing is true in Greenville, South Carolina, same thing is true in Johnson City, New York, same thing is true in Grand Rapids, Michigan and Salem, Oregon, and Los Angeles, California and Cedarville, Ohio. I'm not saying that everyone who stays, that God wants them to do something else, but I am saying, and you know it's true. It's so easy to let a job become everything and we cease to even contemplate. What does God want for my life? We're talking about getting weaved into things.

What about athletics? I certainly appreciate the sports program here at Cedarville. I've always enjoyed athletics. I enjoy watching my son play ball. Do you know? I can't ever get away from I Timothy chapter four, verse eight. It says "Bodily exercise profit little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." And it's great to participate in sports, be a basketball player, a golfer, a football player, a baseball player, tennis, whatever it is. But if you let that sport become everything in your life, that is sin.

If you let it become everything, if that's all you can think, and all you're focusing upon is that athletic event, it controls your life. Then you've become weaved into it. Sin. Same way with music. I appreciate the musicians up here this morning, for those who play the piano and the organ, for those who sing for those who are professional musicians, who have a great deal to contribute to the cause of Christ. But if that music becomes everything, then it becomes sin. The same thing is true of academics. Think one of the great things we have to contend with on a campus like this is that we do not allow the academic emphasis to surpass the spiritual emphasis. This can take many shapes and many forms or some young people who get so locked into the books and study, study, study. They've got to get the best grades.

And I appreciate that the Christian ought to do the best in everything that he's in, but then he doesn't have any time to read his Bible. He doesn't have any time to pray and he can't get involved with the groups that are going out and witnessing and sharing the gospel with others. And when you let that happen to your life, then academic emphasis becomes sin. I'm concerned many times. And I suppose I

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can say this by experience because I know how it was when I was a college student and a seminary student. We figure that it's our responsibility to solve all the great theological problems that the professors have not yet been able to solve. And so we spend a great deal of time in the dormitories and the cafeteria, et cetera, discussing and debating some of these great things. And I have recently spent a month, actually five weeks, in the book of I Timothy. And I've had an eye opener on some of this.

I have become convinced that we are spending a lot of time on some questions that gender strife and division instead of godliness. And if all you do is sit around, discussing things in reality you're not going to come up with any answers to anyway. And all it does is cause you to really get away from the things that you can understand. Then I believe that that's wrong and you've got to be careful. There is an academic spiritual emphasis is constantly tossing out questions and never coming up with any answers. There is a fear of dogmatism. There's a fear of taking a stand on anything. And this is all in the name of academic excellence. I do not believe that this is the emphasis in the New Testament. And I challenge you to take the book of I Timothy and study what I'm talking about right now.

You can start, Paul doesn't get far into the first chapter before he hits it. And before he closes the book, he's dealt with it in almost every chapter. And right before he signs his letter, he says, don't forget Timothy, what I told you about this kind of questioning that genders strife. And of course when we think about being weaved in, I don't suppose there's anything in a young person's life when he is in college, causes him to get away from the battle, hinders him from being the totally dedicated Christian he ought to be more than a guy or a gal.

As I said yesterday, I certainly believe in dating. In fact, if you ever plan to get married, you got to start dating somewhere along the line. And I mentioned how I met my wife and for three and a half years we went together, et cetera. But you know, it's amazing how many young fellas and young ladies are going great guns spiritually until all of a sudden a guy comes into their life or a gal comes into their life. And then that person becomes everything. Many times there's not even a proper evaluation. Is this the kind of a guy that's going to provide spiritual leadership in my life? Is this the kind of a gal that's going to share the spiritual interest in spiritual things that I have.

You can make a lot of mistakes in your life and get over them. But you make a mistake in the person you marry and you will never get over it. Let me illustrate. When I was saved, I was working for a man in Cincinnati, Ohio who owned a vending business. After I was saved, I started praying about going off the school. I didn't know much about the will of God and the Lord directed me as to where to go. And I was fully determined to take off in September and go.

I went up to my boss and I said, "Boss, just want you to know I'm going off of school." Told him all about it. And he said, "Let's go for a ride in the car." So we got in the car and we took off for a ride around Cincinnati and he said, "How'd you like to have half the business?" I said, "What?" He said, "How'd you like to have half the business?" I said, "I'm 17 years old." He said, "I know it." He said, "I'll draw up the contract and by the time you're 21 years of age, you can have half the business." He said, "It's worth somewhere around \$200,000." I couldn't believe how I went back to the churches, stood up and gave my testimony at next Sunday night, how the Lord had led me to stay home.

It's amazing how fickle God is. I'd just given a testimony, not too many weeks before, about how the Lord led me to go to school, but now strangely enough, And I told him I had it all figured out because after all I could be a tithing deacon. And if you're going to be a deacon, you ought to be a tithing deacon. Right? And think of all the money that I could give to the Lord. I had it all figured out. And I thought, this is just great. I didn't go to school in September. You talk about one miserable young man. I have never gone through such misery in my entire life as I went through those next four months. And when January came that next semester, I went up to that fellow. I said, "You can have it. There's no way I'm staying

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here. I'm going off to school." And I went off and I have never regretted to this day, but I lost four months of my life.

Perhaps, a young man gets mad at his girl or mad at his mom and dad or someone and goes down and joins a marine. The second day he gets out of bed and he says, "Oh boy, did I ever blow it. I made a mistake." And he calls in the Master Sergeant or whatever you call. He says, "Look, buddy, I'm out of the will of God." Four years. I lost four months. This guy loses four years. You marry the wrong person and you lost a life.

Paul said, "Now therefore into a hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." It's a battle. It's not going to be easy. There are decisions to be made. There're problems to wrestle with. It's not going to be cut and dried. No man, that wareth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who have chosen him to be a soldier. The challenge today gang is let's quit playing around. Let's get involved in the conflict. Let's get involved in the warfare. And too many of you been sitting on the sidelines and too many of you know that you've been weaved into things in this life that you need to be cut loose from. And I pray God that you'll make a vital decision on it today. Let's bow for prayer. Shall we?

This is evangelist Paul Dixon. I want to thank you for listening to this message from the word of God. I trust that it has been a blessing to your life. If you have never received Jesus Christ as your savior, let me encourage you to do so, right now. I would invite the Christian listeners to pass this tape onto a friend. Helpful literature is available to those who make decisions for Christ if you'll write to the following address, Christian Educational Publications, Cedarville College, Cedarville, Ohio 45314.