

# Trinity II

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Date: 13 June 2021

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[ 0 : 00 ] For the Lord your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to save you. Verse from this morning's lesson in Deuteronomy, in the name of the Father, in the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen. Imagine being a soldier in ancient Israel. You've marched to the battleground. You can see the enemy arrayed on their battle lines.

You see and hear the horses and chariots of the enemy ready to charge. Your adrenaline is flowing and your heart is racing.

The battle is on. But then just before you were to engage, the officers came forward and addressed the army. Systematically, they released soldiers from the fight.

They would say, have you recently built a new home? You can leave the battle formation. Have you recently planted a vineyard?

[ 1 : 05 ] You too can leave. Are you engaged to be married? Go on home to your fiancé. And then the kicker, are any of you afraid to fight?

It's okay. Go on home. After all those fellow soldiers had been released, only half or maybe even less of the army you marched in with might be standing with you.

The enemy's army is already larger and likely better equipped. So how are you going to fight them with fewer soldiers? Our remaining soldier might be thinking, God can't know what he's doing.

Of course, God knows exactly what he's doing. But in the moment of battle, at the time when the enemy is to be engaged, the soldier might forget that.

The battle is the Lord's. Since Pentecost, the place Old Covenant Israel held before God is now held by the church.

[ 2 : 14 ] And while we as Anglo-Catholics know one portion of the church is the church militant, that portion does not take up arms to fight physical battles like the army of Israel did.

2 Corinthians 10, verses 3-5 states, For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Now we should note that St. Paul does not say that we are not in a war. What he says is that we do not war after the flesh.

We do not use physical weapons to fight against the enemies of Christ and his church. We do not use physical weapons because the enemy is not physical.

[ 3 : 24 ] The enemy and his army are spiritual. Ephesians 6, verse 12 states, For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.

Because the enemy is spiritual, the battle must be also. Now in saying the enemies we face are spiritual, I'm not saying they do not manifest themselves in human-led institutions and people.

As Christ dwells in the church and by baptism in each one of us, and we dwell in him, so also there are institutions and men and women who are in this world, who dwell in the devil, and the devil dwells in them.

Satan directs the words and actions of people who submit their wills to him as our wills and our words and actions are directed by the Holy Spirit as we submit our wills to Christ.

But the battle is still spiritual, and therefore the way we fight must be too. If we think we can fight against the enemies of Christ and the church using the weapons of the world, politics, money, and power, we are gravely mistaken.

[ 4 : 57 ] The battle is the Lord's. Victory comes only by his hand and in his ways. He only needs a few faithful disciples living the faith and on their knees to take down any stronghold he wants taken down.

A great Old Testament analogy is found in Judges chapter 7. Gideon assembled an army of 32,000 men to fight against the Midianites.

But by the time the battle actually began, God had dismissed over 90% of his army, which is 300 men.

God defeated the entire Midianite army. 300 men. So why does any of this matter?

It matters because the number of Orthodox churches and Christians is ever shrinking. This past week, Father Miller shared an article with me that stated, the fastest growing denomination today is nones.

[ 6 : 06 ] N-O-N-E-S. Those who have no church or no religious affiliation. The article also said that especially young people are filling the place church membership used to take in life with memberships in organizations like Antifa, Black Lives Matter, and other Satan-controlled social justice institutions.

This being so, if we are going to be engaged in the war for souls, as we should, we will find we have fewer fellow fighters fighting alongside us.

And as the battle lines are drawn, we will likely see more drop out. Yet still, we must not fear, for the battle is the Lord's.

He does not need a lot of boots on the ground to accomplish what he wills. Acts 17, 6 states God utilized 12 men to turn the world upside down.

Now, they were 12 men who were fully committed to our Lord Jesus Christ and to his church. But they were 12 men, just the same. In Christ, quality is always more powerful and effective than quantity.

[ 7 : 33 ] You and I need to gain that quality. My brothers and sisters, the spiritual battle we are called to be engaged in in Christ is by analogy similar to the battles the army of Israel engaged in.

Not in the physical realm, but in the principles for battle and the cause for victory. The battle is the Lord's.

He is the one who brings victory in every engagement. Our place in the fight is to properly prepare ourselves for battle and then engage the enemy.

Not likely on some public stage to be recorded in the annals of history, but in the day-to-day activities and conversations of our personal lives. So what does sound preparation look like?

2 Peter 1, verses 5-8 provides it for us. St. Peter writes, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love.

[ 8 : 58 ] St. Peter says, for if these things are yours, meaning if we possess them and they abound, they're growing, they're strengthening within us, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So we make ready for battle by adding virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, agape, to our faith.

In this morning's epistle, St. John fleshes this out for us in great detail. He states, so the world may hate us for our fidelity to Jesus Christ, the great weapon we must use to counter it is the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts in service to others, both our allies and our enemies.

Driven by love for Christ and for the brethren, we battle by being in the scriptures and in prayer daily. We battle by receiving the Eucharist at least weekly and sacramental absolution often.

We battle by being active in the life of the church through our parish and through our province. We battle by giving up ourselves for others, for the care of their needs and the salvation of their souls.

[ 10 : 25 ] Like the armies of Israel, you and I will often find ourselves feeling quite alone in this battle. Like them, we will see many drop away from the fight. Therefore, we must always remember that the battle is the Lord's and victory only comes by His hand.

God, not the world, defines victory. We must remember the world thought the cross was a defeat. The resurrection proved otherwise.

Comforted and strengthened by this knowledge, let us focus on the preparation and ask the Lord to count us worthy to engage in the fight.

In the name of the Father, in the Son, in the Holy Ghost. Amen.