

Remembrance

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[0 : 00] taken from 2 Corinthians 4.4 and then over into 1 John 5. In 2 Corinthians 4.4 we read these words.

So these are the words of Paul to the church at Corinth. And he is describing the battle. And he says, If you turn across to 1 John 5, you have the similar words coming out of John.

A little different, but of course the meaning is focusing on the same problem. And in 1 John 5 verse 19, verse 18 and 19, And so of course in verse 18 we have the reminder that God not only protects us from not sinning, but he protects us from the evil one, verse 19, because in the world, the whole world lies under the power of the evil one.

So the God of this age blinds the minds of unbelievers, but those who belong to God are saved and protected. But the world nevertheless lies under the power of the influence of the evil one.

Well as we come to these two readings this morning, and on this Remembrance Day, I am conscious, more conscious now than I ever was before, having a brother that has served for a number of years.

[2 : 37] And Remembrance Day for him is something that we could never bring up. So what we're doing here with each other, I could no way do in front of him. Last year, on Remembrance Day, he had a relapse, where mentally he went back, thought that he was in the war zone again, and actually had armed police come to his house to calm him down.

The only thing that was a mercy in that is some of those armed police were ex-military, ex-serving soldiers, and understood the trauma.

So Remembrance Day for us means perhaps something different than it does for, for instance, my brother, Savan. So I would like very much to understand this issue of war and peace, and what it is that we're actually remembering as we remember.

Because I want us to remember the right things. And I also want us to remember that any life lost within that sinful conflict is a life that is going to have to stand before God.

And so their relationship with God and how they relate to God is ultimately the concern of the church. This is what concerns us. We don't want men and women to fight in any kind of war, but when that life is lost, nothing is erased when it comes to that one day they're going to have to meet God.

[4 : 22] The church has benefited by people who fight on the front line, that is spiritually, out there in the world defending the church.

And many in the church enjoy peace, but don't really appreciate that that peace comes at the expense of many women who are fighting for that Christian peace in the political world, in the business world, in the world of theology.

There are many Christians who are front line Christians that protect the church from a lot, and people in the church are sometimes oblivious. And in the same way, that is exactly the same it is with war.

You have many women that go out in front on the front line, and you have people back in the countries who don't fully appreciate or understand that their peace only exists because of front line troops.

It's easy to forget. And then we have the complication of what the soldiers themselves have to deal with, and that is understanding what is it that they're actually fighting for.

[5 : 39] Who are we fighting against, and what are we actually fighting for? What are we actually defending? And this matters a great deal, especially when the Christian is commanded by Christ to seek first the kingdom and his righteousness.

And so not all wars are a righteous endeavor. Some might be. But not all are. And so this is a hugely complicated issue, that when we say we remember, we have to then go, well, what are we remembering?

I want to make the simple point that the only solution to war and battles is Christ Jesus, and that the cause of all war and battles is sin.

And therefore, if you have a solution for sin and Satan, you have a solution for all other war and battles. One follows the other. And so what we see in Scripture is that the victory belongs to Christ, that Satan is defeated, that he crushed the head of the serpent, as promised in Genesis 3.15.

But in this current time, where we don't yet have the fulfillment of the kingdom, we recognize that the world still lives under this influence of Satan, that he just seeks to destroy and ruin.

[7 : 09] And that is played out in people throughout history in wars. And the question is, why? Why does sin eventually end up in war?

And there's a very, very simple answer for why this is the case. The fallen world lies under the influence of Satan, and therefore, fallen men are under the influence of Satan.

Even Jesus had to say to Peter, when Peter did not have his mind on the things of God, get behind me, Satan. So here you have a disciple whose voice box and tongue and mouth can be used for the purposes of the devil.

The moment he takes his mind off seeking first the kingdom and righteousness, he's a prime target for Satan to use. And Jesus, harsh words from Jesus to turn around to a disciple that has followed him for three years and say, get behind me, Satan.

I mean, I would be destroyed by a comment like that. But of course, Jesus' rebukes, of course, come with his grace. So this underlying influence of Satan is one that I don't think that we can overlook.

[8 : 24] Also, throughout Scripture, God never ordains violence. He never approves of it. In fact, he hates the hands that shed innocent blood. God never, you'll never find God being violent or commanding violence or approving of violence or thinking that violence is a necessary means of achieving an outcome.

Not once. But you do read, of course, throughout Scripture of wars and battles and God's people being defeated and God's people killing others at the command of God.

And so we have to conclude, well, in what sense is that right if God never approves or ordains violence? And of course, this is where we have to go and read the Bible carefully and understand that there are different words and there are different means throughout Scripture of achieving God that God uses to achieve his purposes.

And the commandment, thou shall not kill, has more to do with premeditated murder, hence the Hebrew word, rather than it does with killing in battle.

And so throughout Scripture, we're able to make a distinction between those who righteously fight in war to defend and those who in a premeditated fashion go out to kill.

[9 : 49] There is a difference between those type of people. This is why murderers are locked up and soldiers are not. Because we understand the context in which the killing and murdering is happening.

One is a premeditation and the other is a defending, the defending of something and this something we must come to understand. Does that mean that the killing is a good thing?

No. But in a fallen world, we have to understand that God still works. And so even our, as I've said before, even our knowledge is fallen, even our knowledge of things is sinful.

And so that needs reforming just like everything else. So throughout history, Christian men and women have understood whether or not they should engage in war.

Should they be a pacifist? Should they sit back? Or should they engage? And of course it comes down to a few passages which then have to be interpreted.

[10 : 53] And of course it will also kick in with what kind of person you are in terms of could you ever be that type of person that could fight on the front line?

Or could you be a person that wants to serve the war effort by making ammunition back in the warehouses? And so Christian men and women throughout history have struggled where they come down on this issue.

Do we support? Or do we retreat? And of course that can cause sort of emotional trouble on both sides. You know, when you think of, for instance, Adolf Hitler, and then you think of the Americans

and the British, or if you think of Stalin, then it's fairly easy, I would argue, to see the difference between good and evil.

Between righteous thinking and righteous defending and that which is clearly horrendous, heinous, just terrible on a number of different levels.

That I have less difficulty with. One of the wars that I have the biggest difficulty with is the Civil War in America where you have Robert E. Lee in the north for the Federates and then you have Stonewall Jackson in the south for the Confederates.

[12:22] and both men are Bible-believing, Jesus-honoring, church-going, church-serving. Stonewall Jackson used to send his tithes back to the church and teach in Sunday school even during the war time.

I have a greater difficulty of these two men on opposite sides within a civil war fighting each other and a war that achieved a purpose of freeing slaves only at the cost of 600,000 men.

At no other point in history have slaves been freed at the cost of so many men. So if we argue that that war was really over slavery which I think my reading of history would say that only a small part of that war was over the freeing of slaves.

But even if you say that was the main issue, the command was that at the end of that war over 600,000 men died for that to be possible. But when you look at the freeing of slaves throughout history in other places it's not required that kind of level of death especially at the hands of men who were commanders of their retrospective sides and who were devout Bible-believing Christians.

So I have much more difficulty with something like that because how do you choose a side? How do you defend what is right and wrong in a situation like that? So this is when we say we remember those who have died what are we remembering?

[14:00] What are we remembering? And it's easy to think of perhaps the Second World War because it's perhaps easier to see a divide of good and evil clearer than perhaps other wars where it is not so clear.

And perhaps other wars where we're not even convinced as to why these men and women are even fighting in the first place. One of my first not one of mine but one of my Savanne's first postings after Northern Ireland was in Sierra Leone and he says he has never experienced anything like it because they were not allowed to shoot anyone under the age of sort of 16 or 18 and you have 13 year old boys pulling guns on you.

What do you do? And I said well what were you over there for? Well I don't quite remember. You don't actually know. And so you recognize you must be there for some reason but it's not always clear in the heat of battle what it is that you're defending or what it is or who it is that you're fighting. And what if the people you're fighting are actually trying to defend something? So then you end up with a position of well what are we trying to promote in the world and what are we trying to defend in the world?

And we come to the conclusion that the world is fallen and men and women on different sides of wars are fighting for what they believe is right and just hopefully and have died in the process trying to promote perhaps other people's agendas.

[15:39] I could never take I don't believe perhaps if I was pushed to it in defending my family or defending others that I probably could be get to the point where I could kill another man but I have a brother who has killed other men and I have seen how it is destroyed him emotionally physically mentally and where he is probably going to struggle now for the rest of his life.

So the idea of the war is over and we can remember the bravery and yet for my brother Savan this day is the worst day of the year and perhaps it is for many others who serve.

So why does this happen and what are we remembering? Well one of the things I'd like us to at least bear in mind is that when we remember the first world war and the second world war we think we got a clear idea.

when we remember 9-11 and 7-7 we're able to remember the Twin Towers and the London Underground bombing but when we're remembering I'm guessing that you're not remembering the terrorists.

I think you're remembering the tragedy I think you're remembering the people that have died but you're not remembering the terrorists but these terrorists are promoting their view that has been given to them from God.

[17:09] They're promoting at least something in their eyes which is godly. So now we get to the spiritual element now we actually get to the element where we recognize that the world lives under

the control and what are we going to promote?

Are Christians going to stand up and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness or are we going to allow others to through terrorism to define what is an act of God?

So this is this does concern us and this is where it concerned us. When God created man he created man in his image. One of the ways that we can describe a man or as a man ought to be is that a man works because God works.

So when you see Adam working in the garden it's not just because God gave something Adam to do but because God created Adam in his image Adam works because God works.

It's the way he reflects God. Adam is also commanded to take dominion. That is to take dominion and recognize that the world is God's world and Adam is God's servant in that sense and therefore he is to take dominion that he is to in many ways seek God's kingdom on earth and pursue righteousness on earth.

[18 : 30] And of course the moment Satan comes he doesn't attack the trees he doesn't attack the plants he doesn't attack the fish in the sea or the animals on the ground he goes after man he goes after the very image of God and why does he go after the very image of God?

Because the image of God is that which takes dominion. Christians are not very good at this at taking dominion. We tend to sit back and I think perhaps the church if anything in the next years coming that we have to learn again what it means to take dominion.

And so what happens is that now in a fallen world you still have man taking dominion but he does so in a fallen way.

And so you have terrorism. You have people trying to feed one nation you have one nation trying to feed another nation over the resources found in that nation.

So they're still trying to take dominion because we're made in the image of God but now because the image of God is fallen people are trying to take dominion in a fallen sinful way.

[19 : 48] That's the tragedy that the world lies under the influence of Satan. That it is in many ways trying to fulfill the image of God in taking dominion because it's not completely destroyed but it does so now in a fallen way.

Let me finish with these words and with these final comments. I have the six volume account of Winston Churchill's commentary reflections on the Second World War.

In the last book in the sixth volume he says this how the great demographies triumphed. and so were able to resume the follies which had so nearly cost them their life in the first place.

In other words he could see that no one had learned anything. And then after it was over they were re-resuming or resuming the very things that so nearly cost them their lives in the first place.

Sinfulness never wins. unrighteousness never wins. And you have men and women out there fighting wars under the influence of the evil one who have died and will one day have to stand before God.

[21 : 08] Because the God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers. And the God of this age has an influence over the world that the unsaved cannot notice or be protected from.

It is only by belonging to Christ Jesus that we are protected from the evil one. So as we remember let's remember what it is that we're remembering.

Number one it is that the victory belongs to Christ. Christ. But that doesn't mean the battle is over. It certainly doesn't mean the battle is over for Christianity. But what it does mean is that Christians are able to find what is worth fighting for.

And that is the kingdom and righteousness. And so as we remember men and women who have died in battles under the influence of Satan, under the influence of the evil one, what we're actually remembering is the loss and the tragedy of a sinful world.

And while we are extremely thankful for those who have defended national freedoms, we are actually remembering that there is a better way.

[22 : 24] and the sadness is that the enemy, the devil, is still blinding many people. And so if we're going to treat our soldiers respectfully and all of those throughout the world in their different nationalities, let's remember that they have a different kind of battle and we have a battle as well.

And so as we remember those who have served for righteousness sake, fighting to defend that which is right and good and true, that is to remember the right things. But we do not remember terrorism and we do not remember those who promote terrorism because we will not remember unrighteousness as something to be honored or respected.

Amen. Well as we prepare for the table, we'll listen to this next hymn.
Thank you. Phil. Here we go. No joke,