“When people inquire as to the relevance of our gospel, we must not be tricked into going on the defensive. We must immediately take the offensive, for our Lord Himself has promised that the gates of hell shall not withstand the assault of His Church.”

DR. LEIGHTON FORD

Kirk’s Comment

The enemy is extremely smart and persuasive. He knows how to find our weakness and attack us there without mercy. We must put on the full armor of God and live not by sight, but by faith.

QUESTIONS & OBJECTIONS

“Didn’t Jesus pray to the Father to prevent the crucifixion?”

Matthew 26:39, Mark 14:36, and Luke 22:42 are parallel passages that take place in the Garden of Gethsemane just before Jesus’ arrest. In all these passages Jesus never asks for the crucifixion to be prevented, but does express His fears of the difficulties, pain, and suffering that He will encounter over the next few hours. He will be enduring His trials, beatings, whippings, loneliness, alienation from people and from God on the cross, the ordeal of crucifixion itself, and the upcoming triumph over Satan. He does, however, more importantly ask for God’s will to be carried out over the next few hours knowing that this is the means by which
He will die and rise again, and by doing so atone for all the sins of the world.

In John 12:27, which takes place before the circumstances described above, Jesus is speaking to a crowd during the Passover Festival at the Temple in Jerusalem (before the gathering of the Twelve with Jesus at the Upper Room). On this occasion, Jesus again says something very similar to the passages above: “Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father save me from this hour’? No it was for this very reason that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!”

Again we are reminded that Jesus is feeling troubled. He knows that events are fast unfolding around Him. Is it really conceivable that this Man wants to prevent the crucifixion from taking place? I think not! As He stated, this is the very reason that He came to earth—to give His life as a ransom for many.

God is calling each soldier in His army to become personally involved in the battle to win this world for Christ. No longer can we rely solely upon great preachers to do our fighting for us. Billy Graham said, “Mass crusades, to which I have committed my life, will never finish the job; but one to one will.”

The answer to the dilemma of how to reach the unsaved is for each of us to do battle right in our workplace, to rub shoulders with those held captive by the enemy. Each of us has a unique sphere of influence.

As Christians we are called to follow Jesus and be “fishers of men.” If we are not preaching the Word in season and out of season, it is probably because we are following at too great a distance. We can neither see His example nor hear His voice. Those who follow close to the Master will know His voice. They will obey it and be true and faithful witnesses.

If you are going to do anything for the kingdom of God, be ready for unexpected abuse. This may come through a Christian brother or sister—the place least expected. Satan spoke directly through Peter in an attempt to stop Jesus from doing the will of the Father. It was David’s elder brother who tried to discourage him from slaying Goliath.
A zealous Christian once had a conversation with his mother that totally discouraged him from seeking the lost. She was his own flesh and blood, and he listened to her speak nothing but discouragement for over an hour. She told him of his foolishness in wanting to preach when he hadn’t even been through seminary. Who was he to go around telling people about their need of Christ, when he wasn’t even trained to be a minister! Words of death went right into his heart and stole his courage. He lost his zeal, his direction, and his desire to do anything for the kingdom of God. It was only when he gave himself to prayer that he realized Satan’s subtlety. The enemy will stop at nothing to get you back into the barracks of your local church building. He wants you worshiping God and ignoring His will. He will use any mouthpiece available, and there are plenty of willing lips. Jesus told us to watch out for this: “What I say to you I say to all, Watch” (Mark 13:37).

Satan will often withhold an attack until you are in a place of vulnerability. He will not strike when you are full of faith and power, but when you are tired, fasting, or carrying a problem on your shoulders. If you witness or preach open-air, you may be approached by a Christian brother or sister who will say things like, “You’re doing a fine job, but do you think you are really doing any good?” They will tell you that you should just be living the Christian life rather than confronting people about their sin.

Satan has no mercy. He will stomp on you when you are down and dig his grimy heel into the back of your neck. Don’t listen to his lies! Satan hates you and has a rotten plan for your life. Your downfall is his delight. So, keep your shield of faith held high and “watch.”

We should love the word encouragement. Robert Louis Stevenson said, “Keep your fears to yourself but share your courage with others.” This was clearly illustrated in the lives of Joshua and Caleb, who had positive, hopeful, valiant, courageous, optimistic spirits. This is also called “faith.”

If we can’t say something positive, we shouldn’t say anything. The children of Israel were told not to speak as they walked around the walls of Jericho. What they were doing was foolish. They were opening themselves to the ridicule of the enemy. It would have been hard to say anything positive, but when they did say something, it brought the downfall
of the enemy, not their brethren. Let’s be the same. May we never be a vehicle of the enemy, and may each of us be ready to lift our shield high so that subtle words of discouragement are deflected from their target.

**Questions**

1. **What is God calling each of us to do?**

2. **What did Billy Graham say about the means of evangelism?**

3. **If we are not “fishers of men,” what could be the problem?**

4. **Through what source does Satan sometimes attack us?**

5. **At what point does Satan usually attack?**
6. What were the children of Israel not allowed to do as they walked around Jericho?

7. How should Christians use their shield of faith?

Feathers for Arrows

Recently two boys who were fishing tried to cross a swift stream. As they did so, a log knocked them both into deeper water. One made it to the riverbank but the other got into difficulty. A man saw him, dived in, and after a long while fighting the current, got the exhausted boy to the edge of the riverbank. With both of his arms lifting the lad, he tossed him onto the bank. A woman grabbed the boy, and then watched as the man sunk down into the water. She thought he was swimming to the shore. He came up once more, then drowned. Tragically, he gave his all in saving the boy, and had nothing left to save himself.

Imagine relating that story to someone without giving the details preceding it: “A man drowned in a river today.” The truth is that the danger the boy was in, due to the swiftness of the current, led the man to give his all, showing what love he had for the boy.

Words of Comfort

Many years ago, as our family was about to start a meal at a friend’s house, our five-year-old child said in a clear voice, “Dad, I don’t like this food. When are we going home?”
I read of a similar incident where a mother and her young daughter were visiting their neighbor when the little girl asked if she could see her neighbor’s newly painted bedroom. The woman was quite taken aback that she was interested, so the three of them went into the bedroom. When they stepped into the room, the little girl turned to her mother and said in that clear voice children reserve for such occasions, “Mom, it doesn’t make me sick!”

**Last Words**

Anna M. Shurman, who passed away in 1678, was a German artist and scholar whose works were of high repute. She was likewise a humble believer and as she died bore this testimony:

“I have proceeded one step farther toward eternity, and if the Lord shall be pleased to increase my pains, it will be no cause of sorrow to me.”

**Memory Verse**

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

**Joshua 1:9**