

STRATEGY FOR CONQUEST  
BY: Howard Butt

"And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer." (Rev.6:2)

"The Lord is a man of war." (Exodus 15:3)

Our God is a man of battle.

Two men fought side by side in the battle of the Alamo for Texas independence. One man is forgotten today. The other, famous. A man named Rose slipped over the back wall to a coward's safety. He is remembered today by only a few historians with contempt and shame. The other man went down fighting. His name was Davy Crockett. His ballad has made that gallantry household knowledge across the United States.

In a world that makes a hero of Davy Crockett, that bows before bravery and courage, Christian, lift up your head. Our God is a man of battle. He is a victorious Saviour.

I have recently returned from Scotland and the Billy Graham Crusade there. In that country, as in America, Christianity has too long been on the defensive: cowering in the trenches of discouragement, crouching in the foxholes of fear, overcome by indifference, defeated by skepticism. Scotland in the years gone by has seen Christianity in retreat. But these past few weeks that has changed.

The ancient motto of the city of Glasgow was, "Let Glasgow Flourish by the Preaching Of the Word and the Praising of His Name." The aged slogan told of the historic faith in God of that city. But in the generations gone by, the harsh acids of the 20th Century have eaten at that faith till finally, trimmed by secularism and materialism and unconcern, the motto has simply read. "Let Glasgow Flourish." But in these past weeks again, through the impact of the Spirit of God in the meetings at Kelvin Hall, the old motto has been revived. It read in blazing letters across the front of that great auditorium, the largest sign in Great Britain, in full, recaptured glory. The conviction of Scottish Christians: "Let Glasgow Flourish by the Preaching of His Word and the Praising of His Name."

And as I saw that, as I saw men and women by the hundreds of thousands come to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as I saw Christians in every walk of life with bold assurance witness to the transforming power of God, as I saw a nation shaken and an entire population spiritually awakened, I said, "This is it!" This is Christianity at its best. This is New Testament religion in battle dress, going forward, aggressive, driving, marching, conquering, doing exploits and making history for God.

This is what the God of battle intended all along.

This is Christianity on the march, with the banner of the cross raised high and the standard lifted to the sky. This is conquering faith, battering down walls of unbelief, storming through fortresses of sin and immorality, marching triumphantly over mountains of difficulty and opposition.

A Scottish minister reminded me of John Quincy Adams' apt statement before he signed the Declaration of Independence. A friend said, "Mr. Adams, the colonies are ripe for independence," and Adams replied, "Ripe for independence? Not ripe, Sir, but rotting for want of it!" The Church of Scotland minister said, "Mr. Butt, Scotland is not ripe for evangelism, but rotting for want of it!" My friend, America is ripe for evangelism. The world in which we live, fear crazed, and trembling in atomic hysteria, is not ripe for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is rotting for want of it!

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The 20th Century vacuum of faith is the nameless, undescribed hunger for victory that Christ can give. Our God is a man of battle. He waits for men to march at His side.

What then is our strategy for conquest? Let us look at our weapons.

1. FIRST WEAPON: THE MYSTERIOUSLY MODERN MESSAGE

Dr. Billy Graham and I were traveling one day in Southern England. We stopped at the Chichester Cathedral. He wanted me to see that famed Sanctuary, whose construction was begun in 1191. We entered and prayed. As we left, standing in awe before the ancient splendor of that magnificent old Shrine of faith, two jet fighters suddenly roared over our heads. I looked away from the historic church to the streaks those two fighters made across the blue sky. For a moment the incongruity of it struck me. This building, representing the centuries of the past, versus those two streaking symbols of our jet-propelled age. Can the centuries of the past speak to our speeding present? Does the church of history have a message for the 20th Century?

My friend, it does.

It does by the message of this living Book. The Word of God, eternally modern everlastingly contemporary.

Everything in the 20th Century is afflicted with an incurable disease. That disease is called obsolescence.

The grocery stores we built five years ago must be remodeled today if we are to remain up to date. The closed meat cases our company bought as recently as seven years ago, are outmoded today by the new open-self-service counters. This is obsolescence in the grocery business. And it is painful.

Obsolescence in women's fashion is known as style.

Obsolescence operates in music. Davy Crockett is popular today, but in the months to come Davy Crockett will die. "Wait Till' the Sun Shines Nellie" was a grand song twenty years ago, but it is a dead number in 1955.

Yesterday's newspaper becomes obsolete in twenty-four hours. The book of the month is soon gone as new books of new months crowd in. But there is one piece of literature that is immune to obsolescence. This Book.

Not the Book of the month, but the Book of the ages.

Hebrews 4:12 says, "The Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword."

Spurgeon was criticized one day for not defending the Bible against its attackers. He replied, "Defend the Bible? I would as soon defend a lion! Don't defend it: unchain it! It will defend itself!"

My friend, unchain the Bible in your life and it will defend itself. Unchain its power for your daily living and it will give you victory. Unchain its strength for your Christian activity and you will see fresh conquest.

The woman on the mission field sat reading her first copy of the Scriptures. A friend said, "Are you reading the Bible?" She said, "No, I am not reading this Book. It is reading me." That is the power of the Word of God, is it not? The uncanny sensation that it was written about you; it was written about me.

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Mr. James Stewart said it so well. "This Book has hands that leap from the page and grip our very souls. It has feet like the hound of Heaven that pursue us and track us down. It has eyes like a flame of fire to burn away our sophistries and sham. It has a voice like a thousand trumpets on the battlements of Heaven to resurrect the dead."

The Bible is our weapon of offensive crusade. Take the helmet of salvation and the Sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Ephesians 6:17.

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." II Cor. 10:4.

Our God is a man of battle. He waits tonight for those men who will take the Word of God in their hands and march at His side.

## II. SECOND WEAPON: THE MAGNETISM OF THE MESSENGER

But the Bible by itself is not enough. Its amazingly contemporary power must be translated into human flesh. The presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is never impersonal. God's method is a man. A preacher. A Sunday School teacher. A Christian businessman. A consecrated housewife. We are ambassadors for Christ.

The effectiveness of the Word of God in the battle depends on the lives of the Christians who bear it. It rests on the force of their own experience. Religious belief can be dry, dull, dead, sterile, impotent, and useless. The breath of God must come to put life into dry bones. The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

I heard recently of a religious encampment where each speaker was asked to preach on the same subject. It was simply, "What Jesus Christ Has Meant to Me Since 7 o'clock This Morning."

If you had to speak on that subject, what would you say?

Is there a daily, fresh experience of Jesus Christ in your life? Continual, sparkling experiences of His power? The daily assurance of His peace? Regular answers to your prayers? Radiant testimony of His new blessing in your life?

This means magnetism in the messenger. A warmly radiant, drawing, captivating contagious faith.

Bearing the Christian message does not mean becoming religiously offensive. A Christian testimony is not forcing our religion on others. It is never cramming our faith down someone else's throat. Being an ambassador for Christ does not mean that we become some inane religious blabbermouth, bludgeoning others with our faith in God.

Rather, it is the magnetism of an inner experience that completely and totally controls the life. This is the captivating power of Christ - a supernatural attractiveness in the Spirit-filled Christian.

Think of those individuals who have influenced you most.

The people who have made the greatest impact on my life for God were not the most brilliant I have ever known. They were not the most famous or those of greatest prominence. They were not, necessarily, those with the most natural abilities. They were the people with the most complete commitment to Christ. And they were spiritually gripping personalities because of it.

This was the New Testament secret: Christians on fire. And their world could not resist the flame.

The fire of the Spirit of God makes men magnetic. A dull, drab black bar of iron turns red in warm, glowing beauty when plunged into the fire. Our ugliness becomes spiritual attractiveness when the flame of God consumes us.

The little boy beating on a passing turtle's shell with his stick succeeded only in making Mr. Turtle retreat under his protective cover. But his wise father brought the turtle to the warmth of their fireplace. And that atmosphere accomplished what the striking could not do. Mr. Turtle's head popped out in a friendly greeting.

The warmth of the flame of God's loving presence in your life will thaw out frigid spiritual indifference of those with whom you come into contact.

The fire of God produces the magnetism.

C. S. Lewis says Christianity is like a good disease. It must be taught. But it must also be caught. We are to be "carriers" of this good disease. Ours must become a contagious faith. Our own infection must be complete. When it is, a good epidemic of Christianity will break out. Do you really have a good "case" of total devotion to Jesus Christ?

This is the greatest sermon of all: the magnetic life.

Our God is a man of battle and He waits for men, captured by Christ, to march by His side.

### III. THIRD WEAPON: THE MOBILIZED ARMY

Our strategy for conquest develops. The message. The man captivated by it. And those men mobilized and marching.

In this spiritual offensive, the laymen and the ministers must march together. The minister is like the commissioned officer of the Army. He is specially called, specially designated as leader. He has assumed specific and great responsibilities. But the laymen constitute the troops. The temptation for all of us who are laymen is to sing at the top of our voices "Onward Christian Soldiers" and then send the preachers out to fight the war.

No army marches very far without the troops. There are in tragic guilt tonight, many laymen who claim to have volunteered for the forces for God who are AWOL from their post of duty.

But really, this is not a good analogy, is it? Because in the Army, all the accountability rests upon the commissioned officers. And the enlisted men don't have that responsibility that is ultimate and final upon their shoulders. But it doesn't work that way in the ranks of God. The layman has the same responsibility to live a total life of consecration as the minister. He will be held accountable in the day of Judgment for his testimony and the consistency of his living in the same way as his pastor.

Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service." Romans 12:1.

And he did not write those words to clergymen alone. We are all called to present ourselves totally to Christ. God calls for at least 10% of your money, my friend. But He calls for 100% of your heart. And if he has 100% of your heart, the money will take care of itself.

America is becoming a nation of spectators. We go to the theater and see others perform. At the baseball field we watch others play. We sit before a television set while others entertain.

But our churches are affected more seriously than all the rest. Spectator Christians. We go to church and watch others carry the load.

Whoever made the first string sitting in the stands? Whoever became an All-American by cheering from the side-line?

Dr. Havner said it well. "What began with a company of lay-witnesses has become a professional pulpitism, financed by lay-spectators." The church deteriorates to religious entertainment. As the average member listens to the minister perform.

John R. Mott said, "You say you have faith? Very well. Give it away or give it up."

Share your experience of Christ with others or it will shrivel within you.

Revelation 12:11 says, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony."

My little three year old boy recently, hearing his mother speak of my preaching activities, said, "Mommy, what's preachin'?" She tried to explain about my laywork and about what preaching the Gospel constitutes. After she had done her best, he laughed and said, "Oh, I understand, Mommy. Preachin's jus' talkin'."

Mr. Layman, that's what it is. You preach by our daily conversation.

We are Christ's witnesses. A witness simply tells what happened. We are not called to be religious debators or theological lawyers. We do not necessarily argue all the intricacies of doctrinal controversy. We simply witness: we tell what happened in our lives when Jesus Christ entered.

Make no mistake about it. This is God's method. The New Testament world was evangelized largely by laymen. Religious history has been written by laymen.

Joseph was a politician.

Amos was a rancher: a vine dresser.

Stephen was a deacon.

Phillip was a layman-evangelist.

Carey, the pioneer of modern missions, was a shoe cobbler.

Charles Finney, the great evangelist, was a college president.

Billy Sunday was a professional baseball player.

Dwight L. Moody was a shoe salesman.

Christian soldiers, this is our logical method for advance. 20th Century warfare is a combination of frontal assault and infiltration. Korea developed the system of infiltration behind the lines. Our Christian warfare is the same. The worship service and the evangelistic Crusade are frontal assaults, but our carrying Jesus Christ into every area of life is the method of infiltration. In sharing Christ in all phases of living, we can permeate our sphere of influence for God.

Do you not agree with me? When Christ said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel," he meant it geographically. Go ye to Africa and China and Japan and India and preach the Gospel there. But He not only meant it geographically, He meant it vocationally. Go ye into the

world of business and preach the Gospel. Go ye into the world of medicine and preach the Gospel. Go ye into the world of education and preach the Gospel. Go ye into the world of law and preach the Gospel. Go ye into all the worlds and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Years ago, a young soldier rushing into battle as a green replacement ran to his commanding officer. "Sir, where shall I fight?" The officer said, "Son, get in anywhere. There's fighting all along the line."

Christian soldier, get in where you are and share your testimony there. Jesus said: "Ye shall be my witnesses, beginning in Jerusalem". Jerusalem, where you are now. Begin there.

This is our message - this is our method for advance.

My friends, we have come to this day of opportunity. The crisis of our age constitutes our golden moment for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Since returning from Scotland, I believe more deeply than ever before that this is God's hour. The timepiece of our generation has struck "God-O-Clock." This is the Encounter with Eternity for our age. This is the 20th century's Date with Destiny!

Tragedy of tragedies, guilt of all guilts, that one soldier who names the name of Jesus Christ should shirk his responsibility. Should he dodge his duty. Should he be found absent without leave.

What will your response be? God calls for men. Men who will out-think, out-work, out-talk, out-live, out-love and if necessary, out-die the world in which we live.

You remember that graphic incident from Homer's Iliad when the armies of Greece, in struggle to the death with the men of Troy, were surrounded at Athens.

The King called all his military leaders together to challenge them for the final fray. Nestor, the famed orator, stood to speak. Silhouetted against the sky, he pointed at the glowing fires of the war camps of the waiting Trojans that surrounded Athens. "Men of Athens, all around us tonight burn the fires of the Trojans. On your decision rests the fate of Greece."

Men and women, all around us tonight burn the fires of evil, the fires of unbelief, the fires of immorality, the fires of paganism, the fires of materialism, the fires of secularism, the fires of indifference. On your decision, rests America, yes. Our generation, yes. But far more, on your decision rests your eternal responsibility to your Lord and your God.

Our God is a God of battle. He waits tonight for those who will march at his side.

You say you will decide for God?

Very well, then. Lift the flag, the banner of that Cross. Hold it high. Set the standard flying in your life, beginning now.

"Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus, going on before."