

In recent months I watched two films, *Brave Heart* and *Spartacus*. The first film portrays the story of William Wallace, who bravely fought for Scotland's independence from England in the 13th century. The other film shares the story of a gladiator Spartacus who leads a revolt in about 70 B.C. against the slave owning Roman oligarchy.

After I watched each of those films, I was deeply challenged by the commitment of each of those freedom fighters, who both died torturous deaths at the hands of their oppressors. There were scenes in each film that were difficult to watch due to the violence and shedding of blood.

The Bible is filled with stories of war and great conflict. In the book of Joshua, we see how God guided his people into the promised land to occupy it. but first they had to conquer their enemies. He gave them the battle plans and weapons through Joshua, their leader. In 1986, the Methodist church removed the hymn, Onward Christian Soldiers from their song books because it was deemed too militaristic. However, there was such an avalanche of letters of disagreement, that they decided to reinstate it. The church must never forget that they have been placed on earth to do battle.

At the initial mention of the church, the first topic Jesus mentions is warfare...**spiritual warfare.** ***I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.*** Matthew 16: 16-18. **The gates of hell are the plans and strategies of the devil.** Jesus gave his church **kingdom keys** to open and close doors in the invisible realm. (more on this in a future message) Jesus purchased those freedom keys for his church, but the price he paid was immense. William Wallace, Spartacus and Jesus Christ would all agree, freedom is not free; its cost is blood, sweat and tears.

***Each believer is a member of an occupational force which has one principal purpose: enforce the victory of calvary.***

- Jack Hayford / Prayer Is Invading the Impossible

**Mankind's bondage** did not begin in an impoverished community or a bad environment but in **a luxurious garden.** An evil entity through a serpent seduced the first man and woman and they lost their God given dominion over earth's creation. To reclaim the title deed to earth and restore freedom and dominion to mankind would require a courageous freedom fighter who could overcome the formidable forces of darkness. Jesus was uniquely qualified for the task.

In the springtime, millions around the world will be drawn to remember the suffering of Jesus of Nazareth, an event that marks the most significant battle of the ages up to this time. There were glimpses of it in the Old Testament, as Satan would seek to attack the ancestral lines from which the promised messiah would come. It was more evident after the birth of Jesus, when Herod ordered the murder of all babies under the age of two in Bethlehem. Jesus was protected through angels, God's secret agents. The warfare intensified nearly thirty years later after Jesus was baptized and entered the desert, where he was tempted by the devil. Jesus used the Word of God to neutralize the enemy attack and then angels came and ministered unto him. For the next three plus years, the forces of darkness harassed and attacked him through antagonistic religious leaders. They finally converged upon him in Jerusalem during the final week of his life and

ministry in early April of 30 A.D. The suffering he bore the next several days was not for himself but for us. It took place at several locations: (read Isaiah 53, a chapter ignored by Jewish rabbis even today as it reveals who the real Messiah is)

**Gethsemane:** Jesus bore our **sorrows** in his soul...even to the point of blood pouring out of his pores as the weight of darkness and sin began to descend upon him. Up to this time in his life, he had been filled with the glory of God, but now he was starting to feel the immensity of the suffering and the weight of sin that was to come upon him.

**Gabbatha:** Jesus bore our **sickness** at the scourging post where his flesh was mutilated and severe pain was inflicted to sensitive areas of his back by 39 lashes from whips with sharp pieces of metal or bone on the ends. By his stripes we are healed. (Gabbatha = the place of elevations) It is where Pilate had his judgment seat and where he delivered Jesus to be crucified.

**Golgotha:** Jesus bore our **sins** on the cross so that we can be righteous. He was despised and rejected by men so that we could be accepted before our Father in heaven. He experienced the **shame** of nakedness and insults on the cross so that we could wear a robe of righteousness and live in dignity in God presence.

The life and death of Jesus displayed the greatest humility, sacrifice and love to ever be seen on planet earth. He did it all for the sake of our freedom from the tyranny of Satan, and the power and penalty of sin. When **blood covenants** were made in Bible days, often a **tree** was planted as a memorial of the occasion. **Scars** would be made on the wrist areas of those making the covenant as a permanent symbol for all to see.

The sacrifice of Jesus is memorialized forever by the symbol of a tree, the wooden cross, and also remembered for all eternity by his nail scarred hands. The joy of liberty is ours because of the man Christ Jesus who won the greatest battle for freedom. **Jesus is the ultimate freedom fighter!** Amen!

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