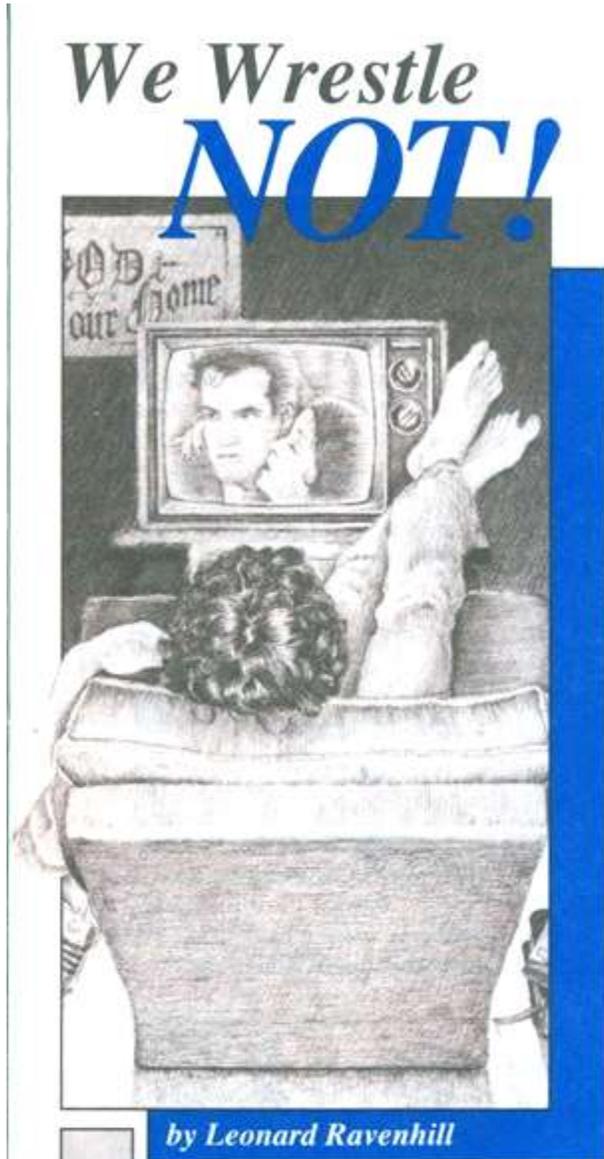


We Wrestle Not!

by Leonard Ravenhill



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We are slackers, and as far as I can discern, at the judgment seat of Christ there will be no medals for slackers. Dear reader, do you and I realize that we are just one heartbeat from a fixed state of reward, be it of joy or shame?

Napoleon Bonaparte made a lonely surprise visit one night to the outpost sentries on one of the vital positions of his battlefield. Stealthily he moved along in the gray light of the morning. One sentry after another immediately challenged him. Finally, the crafty warrior stole up to a strategic spot. There was no sentry to challenge him. The wily Napoleon moved closer and saw a pair of boots protruding from under a shock of corn and a rifle propped beside them. He made no comment - just picked up the rifle and himself stood guard, waiting for the awakening of the snoozing soldier. Finally the corn stirred, and up jumped the guilty defender and grabbed for the gun that was gone. Can you imagine his confusion and chagrin? What a bitter and shattering experience - caught napping by *Napoleon!* When the Lord of glory returns, will He find us Christians sleeping at our post of duty? John the Apostle warns that we be not ashamed before Him at His coming.

I well remember a Bible conference in England where I stood on a platform beside a wrinkled old lady. She had a faraway look in her eyes and the drip of a tear from them too, as hundreds of people were singing:

There is a love constraining me

To go and seek the lost;

I yield, O Lord, my all to Thee,

To save *at any cost.*

That "elect lady," known to prisons and scarred in spiritual battle, was none other than the Marech ale, eldest daughter of William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army. She had written the above stanza as part of a lovely hymn.

The versatility of Paul is amazing. To the Thessalonians the very same man who stormed down the road to Damascus is "as gentle as a nurse;" to the Romans he reveals the brilliance of his legal mind; and to the Corinthians he is "a wise master builder." But to Timothy, Paul is "a soldier of Jesus Christ." Years later the famed English cricketer, C.T. Studd, who deserted the playing field for the battlefield of world evangelism, used to twit folk about being what he called "chocolate soldiers." In his *Quaint Rhymes of a Quondam Cricketer*, he has this ditty:

Get up get up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the Cross,

A lazy Sunday morning surely means harm and loss;

The Church of God is calling; in duty be not slack;

You cannot fight the good fight while lying on your back.

Let's face it: We are *not* living in a day of militant Christianity. The very suggestion throws many into a spiritual pout, for they believe the Lord did all the fighting. (Appalling philosophy!) They glibly tell me, "The battle has already been won at Calvary." Christ *did* win, but that does not eliminate human responsibility. The folly of this philosophy was burned into my mind recently while visiting tough mission fields. Men hardly expect our soldiers on earth's battle fronts to make their own ammunition as well as to fire it at the

belligerent enemy. Yet on the mission battlefield we kept hearing of the lack of conquest when the folk at home cease to pray. The new missionary is snowed under with readjustments. His mind has to get readjusted to a new language; his spirit has to get readjusted to a heathen atmosphere; his appetite has to get readjusted to new foods; his soul has to get readjusted to new emotions. All things are new - new pressures he never dreamed of, new burdens he never thought of, new physical challenges. On top of these, the new missionary has to do his own sweating in prayer for victory against foes, entrenched for millenniums, who stubbornly resist ejection. All this time we at home fail to pray. We are slackers, and as far as I can discern, at the judgment seat of Christ there will be no medals for slackers. Dear reader, do you and I realize

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A missionary just wrote, "On many mission fields there is no lack of new missionaries who have technical knowledge." Of course the know-how for building, educating, and the like, is not to be despised, for there are countries right now where one cannot enter simply as a gospel missionary; he must be an artisan. Nevertheless, today the missionary cries, "We are in need of men of burning hearts, men who can knock on doors, or trail in the bush, men motivated by holy compassion for souls."

I do not doubt that many Christians who read this chapter will mourn that they are not eligible for the foreign field. Others will mourn that though they crucified the flesh and the lusts thereof, they neglected the bit of the text which demands crucifying the affections. There is no question that this demand for crucifixion is tough on young folk. But men who were called to earth's battlefields crucified their affections. In the last war, I saw rivers of tears as men left our country for the mud and blood of the battlefield. The athlete might come back with a shattered body, he might come back blinded, he might come back with a flag over him - but what of that? The risk was coolly calculated, for England was in peril. So, tears or no tears, heartache or no heartache, sacrifice slipped out of one's vocabulary.

But some men who once missed years of home comfort to fight on earth's battlefields will not miss even one night's comfort now to pray for mission fields. Today there is so much physical comfort for the pray-ers. (Our churches are more air-conditioned than prayer-conditioned, and are well-heated, too.) Not so for Master David Brainerd. The lone forest, buried in snow, saw him grief-stricken and brokenhearted over the lawless, immoral, drunken Indians. Of our Saviour one wrote,

"Long nights and chilly mountain air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer."

Prayer is battle. Could it be that in our churches the right slogan over the door of most of our prayer rooms would be "We Wrestle *Not*?" I often see listed in churches names of athletes who will play ball of some kind, but I would like to see these "muscle men" operating where strength really counts - that is, in the place of prayer. Prayer taxes even the physical frame; prayer wears on the nerves; prayer involves the whole man. Prayer *must* have priority. Prayer *must* be our bolt to lock up the night, our key to open the day. Prayer is power. Prayer is wealth. Prayer is health of the soul.

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.
Prayer makes the darkened clouds withdraw;
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above."

Shall men crippled in earthly warfare call Christians "chocolate soldiers" because we fear the gashes the enemy of souls might inflict upon us? God forbid! Shall men whose hearts once bled as they left wife and children (many with a one-way ticket) rise to our condemnation because in the greatest warfare the world has ever known, and for the greatest Captain of time and eternity, we can neither rise to pray nor skip the blankets for one night? Again I quote Scripture: "God forbid!"

When Paul the Apostle says, "Some have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame," *did he mean you?*

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