

“With Battle Damage”

Asher, our 5 year old, is a wild man. He is at a stage where he can be incredibly loving and sweet. He sometimes comes up to me and wants to snuggle...it melts my heart. But he is also one hundred percent wild.

He likes to battle dinosaurs against fire-breathing dragons, crash things, and shoot stuff. Everything becomes a weapon...a stick, graham cracker, or fork. In his little mind, there is always a battle taking place against some fierce enemy. And he comes out as the hero.

He is now into Star Wars paraphernalia. I admit that I am not a Star Wars junkie...I have never watched a full episode or owned a single, action figure. But Asher loves it. Lightsabers made from sticks, broom handles, and cardboard tubes fill our back yard. Recently, we stepped up the game when we added a Rebel Alliance Bowcaster to the collection. What a name! No, this is not a simple space gun or dart-shooter. This is a Rebel Alliance Bowcaster.



After opening the package and loading the darts, Asher was off to enter another great adventure. Before throwing the box away, I noticed an interesting phrase in the top right corner...“With Battle Damage.” On the back of the box, it says that this weapon comes with battle decoration. It looks kind of beat up, marked, and slightly damaged.

With Battle Damage...it “triggered” several reminders about the Christian life.

We are in a Battle.

Sounds like a simple statement, doesn't it. The truth is most believers do not live as if there is a battle taking place. Melody and I did not for many years. We knew that Satan existed and grew up hearing about warfare and the armor of God. But our lives and marriage did not declare our belief. When our marriage collapsed years ago, we suddenly realized the power of the enemy and the intensity of the battle. And it nearly destroyed our marriage and lives.

Some may think that I talk a bit much about this whole warfare thing. I remember a few years ago leading a men's study where I had shown a clip from a war movie to help demonstrate the battle taking place. A hand went up in the back and a man said, “Randy, why all the war and soldier stuff? I don't get it. I go to a job, sit behind a desk, and pay my bills. I am not a soldier. This seems a bit over the top.” I might add that he said this with great sarcasm seasoned with some animosity. I responded by simply saying, “My brother, if you only knew.” And I left it at that.

Please understand that we are in a battle, facing a fierce enemy known to steal, kill, and destroy. Satan celebrates a lost heart or a misguided believer. He takes great joy in planting a religious spirit among God's people. And he loves to see men and women living in fear, playing it safe, and risking little for the Kingdom of God.

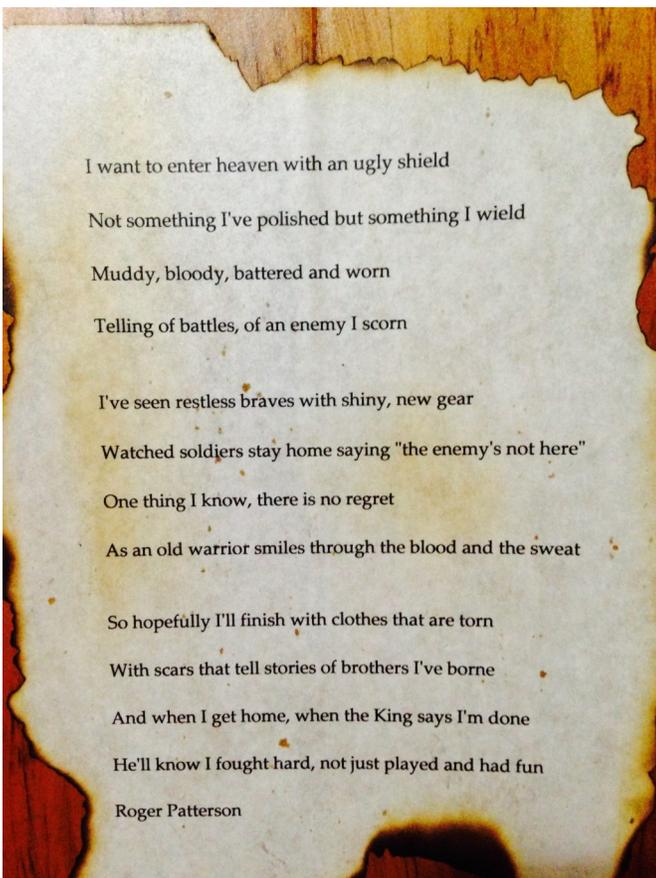
We have victory through Jesus Christ.

We do not fight for victory but from victory. For those who have leaned their broken, sinful, messed up lives into the life and work of Jesus Christ, there is freedom and victory. Thinking about Asher, he enters every battle knowing that he will win. It's the funniest thing...he imagines and designs every battle with the end in mind. He knows that he will come out on top. Now, I am sure there's some childish pride in that. But what if that matches the mentality that believers ought to have. We do enter the battle and we do fight for our hearts, families, churches, and God's Kingdom. But we already know how it turns out. We win!

We can play it safe or risk battle damage.

In the meantime, we have a choice to make. Play it safe? Risk battle damage? If you are a believer, the Gospel story is being told through your story. You have a vital role to play. Where you work, your neighborhood, relationships, influence, and church...no one else can fill your role. To play it safe is to cushion your life against hardship and simply survive. It is to follow the easy path of getting by, paying the bills, planning for retirement, and playing the religious game. Choose that path and you will be in jam-packed company. But there is another road to follow. It is a road less travelled. It will require your heart and redeemed story. It will bring battle damage from a scorned enemy. You will incur several nicks and bruises, and your armor will look a bit worn in the end. But it will...trust me...it will be worth it in the end.

I've got a friend, Roger Patterson, who is an all-purpose kind of guy. He can fix cars, repair most anything in a home, and consistently fights for the hearts of the lesser-thans. But he is also a poet, an artist. Let me finish by sharing a poem that Roger wrote about entering heaven with an ugly shield...



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With Battle Damage,
Randy