

Do You Hear the Rumbblings of Spiritual War?

President Trump announced \$50 billion in tariffs against Chinese imports. The official list of tariffs will be announced within 15 days and then the public will have 30 days to respond. The tariffs are made in retaliation for alleged Chinese theft of U. S. intellectual property. For years, China has reportedly forced U. S. companies to transfer technology to Chinese companies and have restricted access to Chinese markets. China is likely to retaliate with its own trade restrictions.

In classical economic theory, trade benefits both buyers and sellers. In the absence of coercion, no party would trade unless they believe the trade will benefit them. Countries will specialize in areas where they have a comparative advantage, and the economies and standards of living of both countries will increase.

But in recent decades, economists have noted that comparative advantage does a poor job of explaining the rise in some industries such as high-tech manufacturing (jet liners), microprocessors and software. High research and development costs, established technical standards and network effects limit new competition. Forcing technology transfers is an attempt to achieve Chinese dominance in these industries. President Trump may be bringing trade issues to the forefront, but China has engaged in unfair trade practices for decades.

The stakes of a potential trade war are high for the United States, China and the world. China can respond in a variety of ways. Because of an approximately \$500 billion trade imbalance between China and the U. S., the United States could best a tit-for-tat swap in tariffs and other restrictions. But a severe trade war could move the economy and the world into a

recession. China also has other weapons. As of December, China held nearly \$1.2 trillion in U. S. treasuries. If China were to back away from U. S. securities, interest rates would rise and dampen the global economy.

There are certainly rumblings of a trade war. The Dow Jones Industrial Index fell 1,400 points last week as a result of the uncertainty. The tariff announcement could result in negotiations leading to fairer and more balanced trade—a win-win for all parties. Or, dueling tariffs and other restrictions could result in a trade war in which all parties suffer. At this writing, either scenario is possible.

Believers are engaged in a spiritual battle. As sons and daughters of the Most High, we are here on a mission. Our individual callings are important to the fulfillment of God's plan. Public victories are a result of our private victories. Similarly, when we fall short, it is often the result of failing to persevere to achieve private strength, direction and victory. When we fight the Lord's battles in our personal strength, we will often come up short.

The victorious Christian has learned to not fight according to the flesh. We have spiritual weapons that are divinely powerful. We destroy strongholds and everything raised against the knowledge of God. We bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is complete. (2 Cor. 10:3-6).

When we are strong in the Lord, we are in His strength. When

we put on the full armor of God, we can stand firm against anything the devil may throw at us. We don't fight against other men. We fight against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:10-12).

When the Philistines heard that they had anointed David as King of Israel, they went down to the valley of Rephaim. David sought the Lord to ask if he should go against them and if he would be victorious. The Lord assured him on both accounts. David had received his private victory. David and Israel then received a great public victory (2 Sam. 5:17-21).

Again, the Philistines came back to the valley of Rephaim. David was not presumptuous. He again asked the Lord if he should go against them and if he would be victorious. But the Lord told David to not attack directly this time. He was to circle around them and wait until he heard the sound of marching the tops of the balsam trees. That would be his signal to attack, and he would be victorious. David received a private victory, which gave him the public victory (2 Sam. 5: 22-25).

A great multitude was coming against Jehoshaphat. But he didn't panic. He called a fast and assembly throughout all Judah to seek the Lord. He faith was not disappointed. He received a prophecy that the Lord would fight their battle for them. The Lord told him the way that they would be coming. He had received the private victory. The next day, the Lord fought their battle as promised, and Judah spent three days

gathering the spoil (2 Chron. 20).

In this life, Christians will have their battles. We are engaged in a spiritual battle where spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places are arrayed against us. We have the choice of using weapons that are divinely powerful. In generations past, the wise have expended the time and effort to achieve the private victory. We should do likewise. {eoa}

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