

**REV. ROBERT PEEPLE'S MESSAGE  
AT THE 1986 CONVENTION**

“This message is to remind you of some aspects of truth that I believe should have been preached more often. This is not a time of great preaching, of great art, of great music, or of great literature - it is a dangerous time! The chief dangers we face are seldom obvious. That's the way the Devil wants it and so it is easy to be complacent and to miss the serious challenges.

The text is a word St. Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do war after the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds”. (2 Cor 10:3-4)

One translator paraphrases it: “Though we live in the world, we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy evil strongholds.”

All of us have forefathers who fought in the Revolution to get political and economic freedom for our country. Our families are just a few of the thousands of American families who made good on the promise of the Declaration of Independence, to trust in Divine Providence. Our families have made good on the pledges of the Founding Fathers to risk their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor. Our country is great because for centuries our families have loved our country, our homes, and one another just as much as we loved ourselves and our personal comforts. Whenever our Nation and the truths it stands for have been threatened, we Americans have quickly shouldered muskets, Springfieds, M-1's, M-16's, to defend our country and our cherished beliefs and while some were fighting, those who remained at home worked and sacrificed to provide our soldiers with the means of victory, to preserve a home for their return from fighting. There were, sadly, in every generation those who held back, who would not become involved in our country's defense. But our interest is not with laggards and cowards. We are here because of the heroes, the faithful men and women who have risen to every occasion and have kept America great and free.

Because we Americans have never fought just for a piece of ground, or out of self-interest, but rather out of love of our lives in peaceful service to God and to one another, God has abundantly blessed America and the commitment of our people. America and our Christian Church are thus more than mere customs, or the mere circumstances of our lives. They are our very way of life, even as Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” Lifewise, love is more than lip service: love is a way of action, a way of living.

In fact, love, or any other spiritual virtue, like faith, or hope, is not love when it does not bear fruit in action. This is simply the way we human beings were created by God. The only spiritual life we have is the life of our physical actions in the world. If we do not act out our love, our faith, and our hope, we are simply deceiving ourselves and lying to God when we say we love, or hope, or believe. Our Revolutionary War forbears demonstrated and proved this great truth by their actions and we rightly honor them for it.

Not long ago I asked our Church organist why we never sang “Onward Christian Soldiers” any more. She showed her ignorance by replying that some people thought it militaristic. Thank God that it is militaristic, because the truth is that we Americans and Christians, if we are loyal and serious, have committed ourselves to a way of life that demands warfare, if it is going to survive. This is not to say that we love war. Rather we love freedom and the truth of the Gospel. The prince of this world is the Devil. The Devil hates freedom and he hates

the Gospel of Christ. The Devil and those who serve him hate America and Christianity.

St. Paul wrote to the Christians at Ephesus (Eph. 6:12), “We wrestle not against the flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

We human beings live our lives in this world in the flesh, in mortal bodies. This is why the second person of the Divine Trinity, God the Son, became incarnate, put on human flesh of mankind as Jesus of Nazereth to fight the battles of mankind in the flesh of mankind, and for the flesh of mankind. So, our warfare is not just after the flesh but after the Spirit of God. The war we fight is against the oppression of the spirit, against the murder of the soul by Satan and his minions. Our weapons are: the Will of God, the Truth of Holy Scripture, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In this world these weapons are never abstract ideas, never mere nice thoughts and platitudes. We yield these powerful spiritual weapons in the action of our human flesh in the cause of God, of love, of freedom of Satan.

The greatest spiritual events in the history of the world were the physical events of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection. The greatest spiritual events in the history of these United States were the physical actions of our forefathers and us in defending what our nation stands for. The greatest spiritual events, indeed the only spiritual events in the history of the Christian church have been and always will be the living of Christian lives by Christian men and women, the actions of these, our physical bodies and the use of all God's gifts which we possess as His Stewards, in His Service and to His honor and glory.

The Spiritual warfare for truth which is so clearly seen in the physical warfare of this world will never end until the world ends. This is why all pacifists are dupes of the devil and fools to think otherwise—and remember, we have the word of God on that. Until the Last Day when our Lord returns, every American must “be prepared”, armed with the spiritual armor of God and using the tactics of God, to live out the truth we believe, ready to fight for it. We Americans have been given a challenge by God to fight His battles and to be blessed with His blessings. These United States have a great future if we continue to accept our responsibilities to God and to each other.

This is no trivial matter. At any time the American dream could have ended and become a nightmare like Poland or Afghanistan, or Lebanon, or Russia, simply by Americans ceasing to care, ceasing to fight the enemy, ceasing to support our Country, ceasing to live American lives. The same is true of the Church. The call to salvation is heard only by those who care, those who fight for it, those who support it with their living, working, giving.

To fail America is treason to the people of these United States. To fail God is treason to the Kingdom of God, our King.

I know that I believe that Almighty God will give us grace and power to fulfill our commitments, to honor those who have completed their earthly journey, having done their duty, to teach our children and successors including immigrants thankfully and gratefully to accept their responsibilities. This is how we will pass on the glorious heritage we have received. Since God wills it, we can do it.

Invocation. Blessed Lord God, who in the years of Revolutionary War didst dwell among and inspire our fathers to fight manfully for freedom which we still enjoy, come among us in this 97th Annual Convention of South Carolina Society, Sons of the American Revolution, to inspire us as we endeavor to preserve and defend the high ideals and principles for which they fought. Pour out upon each man here present, a generous portion of wisdom and power sufficient for our every under-