

Fifth Annual
TRUTH IN LOVE
LECTURESHIP

Theme:
**Soldiers Of
Christ, Arise**



May 17-21, 1995

PAUL SAIN, DIRECTOR

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INTRODUCTION

The fifth annual **TRUTH IN LOVE** lectureship will include twenty lectures by eighteen speakers on the theme: **“Soldiers Of Christ, Arise.”** Appreciation is expressed to the following, who have had a vital part in this overall work: (1) the speakers, for the actual lecture, as well as the material that is found in this book; (2) the hundreds who attended, as well as many others who will study the material in this book who were unable to attend; (3) the East Hill church workers, many of whom gave sacrificially of themselves to make this effort possible; and (4) the East Hill elders, who have proven their love for the powerful Word of God and continue to hold to the *“old paths”* (Jer. 6:16).

Why This Theme? Why This Study?

The Bible is our sole authority in spiritual matters. The Bible is inspired of God (II Tim. 3:16-17). The Bible is complete (II Peter 1:3; Jude 3). The Bible is without error (James 1:27; II Tim. 3:17). The Bible contains warnings (Rev. 22:18-19; Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6).

The church is the precious body of Christ (Eph. 5:23-28). The church is certainly not the assembly building, but is comprised of each Christian (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2; Acts 11:26 Rom. 12:5). In the holy Scriptures, the church is often pictured in terms which enable us to understand better what the Lord intends for us to do and be. The church is referred to as a kingdom, body, family and army.

Christians are urged, exhorted, and warned concerning remaining “faithful” to the Lord, after becoming a child of God (Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:3-4). Unless we remain “faithful,” we shall not receive a crown of life (Rev. 2:10). Unless we “endure to the end,” we will not

be saved eternally (Matt. 10:22). Unless we remain steadfast, unmoveable and abound in the work of the Lord (I Cor. 15:58), we will have labored in vain. Unless we seek first the kingdom of God, our Father will not bless us with eternal life (Matt. 6:33).

Unless we enlist in the army of God, we will not be a child of God (John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matt. 10:32-33; Mark 16:16). Unless we serve faithfully, work diligently and zealously, endure hardships (Heb. 12:28; Titus 2:14; II Tim. 2:3), we will not hear our Commander in Chief say "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21-23). Unless we fight the good fight of faith (I Tim. 6:12), we will not enjoy the victory as a faithful soldier in the army of Christ (I Cor. 15:57). Unless we continue to fight the enemy, Satan, the adversary, he will overcome and destroy (devour) us (II Peter 2:20-22; I Peter 5:8).

Jehovah God demonstrated His love to us (even while mankind was in sin) in the gift of His Son (Rom. 5:8-9). Jesus died on the cruel cross, for our sins, purchasing the church by which we can be saved (Eph. 5:22-32; Acts 20:28). May we joyously serve in the "army" of our Lord, eagerly following the commands of our Commander in Chief, until the war is over (death comes, or the end of the world).

Paul Sain
Lectureship Director

DEDICATION

One of the great blessings of preaching the gospel is the rich and loving fellowship with thousands of Christians. The one to whom we dedicate this book has enjoyed fellowship with and greatly influenced tens and tens of thousands. This dear brother has an outstanding mind (having received B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees from Freed-Hardeman, David Lipscomb, Abilene Christian, and Southern Illinois Universities), and is *“the best”* in the presentation of the truth, but more importantly, he has kept his feet on solid faithful ground. No *“uncertain sound”* has been heard from this our friend.

In earlier years of his life he preached at the Minor Hill and East Hill congregations. For over sixteen years



he was the local preacher for the Crieve Hall congregation in Nashville, Tennessee. While there, he served as Director of the Nashville School of Preaching. For seventeen years he has taught at David Lipscomb University.

Presently he is heavily involved in gospel meetings, lectureships, and seminars (in addition to his work at David Lipscomb and a significant amount of writing). He also teaches in the School of Bible Emphasis in cooperation with the Hobbs Street congregation in Athens, Alabama.

Brother Tom has written over fifty books, including an outline book on every book of the New Testament, plus several others of equal importance.

Our love for a faithful proclaimer of the Word of God increases when he, as Tom has done, willingly and courageously stands for truth and against false doctrines and ways.

Few Christians have touched so many lives in such a positive, godly way as the one to whom we lovingly dedicate this book ~ our friend and brother **Tom Holland**.

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Soldiers Of Christ, Arise



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Fifth Annual

TRUTH IN LOVE LECTURESHIP



Theme:
*“Soldiers Of Christ,
Arise”*

Section I:
**God’s People:
An Army**

Chapter 1

God's People: Church, Family, Army

Kevin D. Beard



Kevin presently preaches for the church of Christ in Newbern, Tennessee ~ He is a graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching ~ He is a very capable song leader, outstanding proclaimer of the Word of God; writer of class material for teenagers ~ The son of Darrell and Betty Beard (Darrell preaches in Tupelo, MS ~ Kevin and Jan have two children: Jonathan and Justin.

God has always had a people. Righteous Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord by keeping all His commandments (Gen. 6:8,22). Job exemplified what it means to endure faithfully. Abraham's life demonstrated what true faith is. And Israel, even with all her faults, was the nation through whom the Messiah came to earth. God's people, no matter how few or great in number, have existed always to do His will.

God has a people today who must be active in His service. Times have changed; circumstances have changed; laws have changed; but one thing remains constant: God's people exist to carry out His will. Jesus Himself expressed that will:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).

To accomplish that mission, God has authorized a three-fold work for His people, to preach and teach (II Tim.

4:2), to edify or build up the saved (Jude 20), and to help those in need (Gal. 6:10).

The theme **“Soldiers Of Christ Arise”** calls upon God’s people to act and it expresses the urgent need for action. But this action must be governed by understanding, not by confusion. God’s people must understand what being God’s people involves, because proper understanding leads to proper action. To help Christians understand their role in carrying out His work, God has pictured His people in several different ways. By understanding these descriptions and what relevance they have to carrying out the Lord’s work, God’s people can engage themselves in His work with enthusiasm and confidence.

The Kingdom Of God

The New Testament clearly teaches that the people of God are the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17-19; I Thess. 2:12; also, “the kingdom of heaven,” Matt. 16:18-19; “the kingdom of His dear Son,” Col. 1:13, etc.). The implications of such a description make certain areas of Christian service come alive. What is a kingdom? It is a government, a form of rule, a system of authority. In a kingdom, authority rests in the king, not in the subjects. Therefore, the word of the king is law, and not any other one in the kingdom has the right to alter the king’s command. The king has the right to make laws and demands, and by virtue of his being king, is justified in expecting those whom he rules to be obedient to his laws and loyal to his cause.

Jesus Christ reigns in His kingdom today. He has been reigning since the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33-36), and He will continue to reign until the end of time (I

Cor. 15:24-26). Since Jesus is the king over His kingdom, He has all authority in it:

All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18b, ASV).

His Word is the final law,

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

No subject in the kingdom, nor anyone outside the kingdom, has the right to change the law of the King!

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8).

The King demands loyalty from His subjects: "...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10b). So then to be God's people means to be citizens in the kingdom of God with Christ as the King and His Word as the final law.

The Family Of God

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15).

The word "house," as it is used here, refers not to a physical building, but to the ones who dwell in the house, the family.¹ So then the people of God rightly can be called the family of God.

Such a description brings to mind many important qualities. Members of a family share many things in

common with each other that they do not share with people who are not of that family. For instance, because they have the same parents, family members have a relationship with each other that they do not have with anyone else. It is true that members of a family have relationships with people outside the family circle, but those relationships are in their very natures different from the family relationship. The idea of a family also brings to mind a sense of love, acceptance, and unity. No matter what hurdle faces it, a family that is bound together by love can overcome it.

When the Lord called His people His family, surely these are some of the same ideas He wanted to convey. Members of God’s family have a relationship with each other that is unlike any relationship we may have with people outside of the family of God. The same reason explains this as does for the physical family: we have the same Father. Members of the Lord’s church enjoy the blessing of being able to visit any other congregation, and though they may never have met anyone there, they can know and feel that they are among family. The family of God also is characterized by love. We are commanded to,

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another (Rom. 12:10).

We must rejoice with each other and weep with each other (Rom. 12:15). We bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2). And in this family is unity; a unity which rests upon the authority of Christ. John proclaimed that the basis of fellowship is walking in the light as God is in the light (I John 1:7). He told us also not to receive the one who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ (II

John 9-11). As Jesus prayed for those who would believe on Him through the Word of God,

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:21).

The Church

A third description of God's people, the church, occurs more often than any other examined here. The words "church" and "churches" appear 117 times in twenty of the twenty-seven New Testament books. People use the word "church" regularly, probably more often than any other description of God's people. However, it may be that some who call God's people "the church" do so without knowing the significance of what they say. The Greek word *ekklesia*, from which the word "church" is translated, came from two other Greek words: *ek*, meaning "out of," and *klesis*, meaning "a calling."² Originally, the word had reference to "a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly."³ The idea of the word then was that some were called out from one place into another place for another purpose.

The same idea holds true with God's people. According to Peter, the Lord has called His people "...out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9). Further, the New Testament proclaims that we have been called "unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Cor. 1:9), "into the grace of Christ" (Gal. 1:6), "unto liberty" (Gal. 5:13), to "the peace of God" (Col. 3:15), "unto his kingdom and glory" (I Thess. 2:12), "unto holiness" (I Thess. 4:7), "to the obtaining of the

glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thess. 2:14), unto “eternal life” (I Tim. 6:12), “unto his eternal glory” (I Peter 5:10), “to glory and virtue” (II Peter 1:3). Thus when the Bible refers to God’s people as “the church,” we ought to understand that this alludes to a change: a change of place in that we have been called out of the world and into Christ, and a change of purpose in that we have been called from serving Satan to serving God.

The Army Of God

This fourth description of God’s people does not occur per se in the New Testament, but the idea certainly is presented. While the church is not specifically called “the army of God, Christians certainly are called “soldiers.” Paul instructed Timothy, “Thou therefore, endure hardships, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (II Tim. 2:3). Paul referred to Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25) and Archippus (Phile. 2) as his “fellowsoldiers.” Christians, as soldiers, also are exhorted, “take unto you the whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:13). The New Testament also describes the Christian’s life of service as “warfare” (II Cor. 10:3-4; I Tim. 1:18). Therefore, since Christians are soldiers of Christ, and since their service is to “war a good warfare,” surely the church can be thought of as God’s army.

The idea of an army then, supplies many thoughts as to how Christians are to carry out God’s work. An army works together against a common enemy. An army takes its commands from its leader. An army must be vigilant in its service. Soldiers in an army combine their varying specialities to make the army work as a unit. An army concentrates on its mission and makes great

effort to know the enemy. Whenever the army neglects any of these, its effectiveness decreases. For example, if an army ignores the chain of command and each soldier acts on his own, all hope of victory is lost because there is no uniformly accepted plan of action.

One key to victory for any army is to know the enemy. Armies of today spend millions on reconnaissance in order to learn the strengths and weaknesses of their enemies. Espionage has been a mainstay of armies throughout history that they might learn their enemies' plans. Armies need to know as much about their enemies as possible. The Lord's army is no different. We must know the enemy if we hope to be successful against him.

Peter described our enemy:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8).

This enemy not only prowls, searching for victims to destroy, but he does so in a very cunning way. He and his servants use deception (II Cor. 11:14-15). Hunters know how important deception is in bagging their prey. Duck hunters use decoys and calls to draw the ducks to them. Camouflage clothing helps to make it appear that no one is present. Basically, hunters rely on deception to be successful in their hunting. Satan has mastered the act of deception. He will use any disguise to enhance his cause. For centuries he has disguised himself, and his servants have disguised themselves as teachers of the truth. By appearing to be one who teaches the way of righteousness, he has duped millions of unsuspecting souls into his trap.

He lies (Gen. 3:4). Part of his deception necessarily involves lying. In order to get Eve to eat the forbidden

fruit, he lied. Jesus was right when He called Satan the father of lies (John 8:44). He promises great things and does not deliver. As the old saying goes, the sure way to know when he is lying is when he opens his mouth.

He attacks his victims in times of weakness (Matt. 4:2-3). This tactic has proved effective for anyone who seeks an advantage over an adversary. Simeon and Levi took advantage of the weakened condition of the people of Shechem to avenge their sister Dinah (Gen. 34:1-31). Satan works the same way. Jesus fasted forty days, then Satan approached Him tempting Him with food. Satan still seeks opportunities in weakness to attack through the very thing which caused the weakness.

Satan operates through friends and loved ones (Matt. 16:21-23). Perhaps no other person on earth was as close a friend to Jesus as was Peter. And it was Peter whom Satan used to tempt Jesus to give up His mission. Who knows how many people have been destroyed by Satan simply because he used a friend or loved one to accomplish his goal?

He takes advantage of any opportunity (Eph. 4:27). In 1993 the great Mississippi River flooded its banks from Iowa to southern Missouri and Illinois. All throughout the river valley people worked almost without stop to strengthen levees. A weakness in any point was a danger to the whole levee because if there were any point where the soil in the levee began to erode, the water continuously damaged that point, eroding more and more soil, until the entire levee failed. The devil works in much the same way against us as the flood waters did against those levees. If we allow his influence into one small area, he will continue to work until he has permeated and destroyed the whole. This is why

Paul warned “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (I Cor. 5:6).

If God’s army is to succeed against the enemy, we must know who he is and how he operates. No army ever won a war by being ignorant of its enemy’s ways. Satan’s attacks on the Lord’s army are varied. We must not allow ourselves to be so foolish as to think that his attack is on only one or two fronts.

Satan attacks God’s people through false doctrine. That has been one of his most consistent weapons since the church began. Our battle against the increasing tide of false doctrine and false teachers must be strong. We cannot allow the church for which Christ died to be polluted and corrupted by those who would change it to suit their own desires. Scripture not only authorizes the marking and avoiding of false teachers, but it commands such (Rom. 16:17). For soldiers of Jesus Christ to watch and do nothing as corrupting doctrine grows is appalling. These attacks from the wicked one must be stopped not only by pointing out those who propagate such heresy, but also by strengthening the brethren. It seems that more and more Christians know less and less about the Word of God. Consequently, the warning of Hosea is coming true today, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6a). If the influx of denominational doctrines into the body of Christ is to be stopped, then it must be stopped not only by refuting it, but also by equipping the brethren to know error when they hear it and to reject it.

But Satan’s attacks are not only through false doctrine. Does not Satan still attack the Lord’s people through the pull of the world? Is it possible for one to be staunchly opposed to false doctrine and yet lose his

soul because he omitted other weighty matters of the law? The Pharisees were a sect of the Jews who viewed themselves as being more righteous than the common people. The very name “Pharisee” means “separatist” and alludes to their view that they were separated from the common people by their strict observance of the law.⁴ Their strict observance of the outward portions of the law was vain because it was not mixed with a similar enthusiasm for keeping the inward aspects of the law. In His rebuke, Jesus pointed out this weakness:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone (Matt. 23:23).

Hypocrisy made the Pharisees one of the most, if not the most infamous group in the New Testament.

Perhaps the soldiers of Christ would do well to learn a lesson from the Pharisees. It seems the Pharisees forgot that Satan attacks from all sides, not just one. How sad it would be for one who strongly (and correctly) opposes the false doctrine of salvation by grace only to stand condemned because he neglected to keep himself pure. How tragic for one who fought against the sinful practice of allowing women to usurp authority over men in the church to lose his soul because he failed to love his brethren as Christ loved him.

The battle lines are clearly drawn. Satan’s attack must be stopped at all cost or we risk the loss of our souls. But the battle rages on many fronts. False teachers pervert the doctrine of Christ and they must be stopped (Titus 1:10-11). But the world still pulls at Christians

and that too must be fought. Preachers and elders must be concerned with false doctrine, but they also must be concerned with teaching the brethren how better to live the Christian life. Society teems with dangers for God's children as an increasingly permissive society thrives around us. Will we be able to resist the dangers of things like homosexuality, drug and alcohol abuse, abortion, teen pregnancy, promiscuity, divorce, dishonesty, worldliness, materialism, self-centeredness, apathy, evolution, and the hundreds and thousands of other dangers that face the Christians? If so, it only will be through a balanced approach to God's Word.

Thou art near, O Lord; and all thy commandments are truth (Psm. 119:151).

My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteous (Psm. 119:172).

As the psalmist has said: all of God's Word equips the child of God to be righteous (see also II Timothy 3:16-17).

Putting It All Together

As we battle together in God's army against the common enemy, we must consider the kind of army that we are. This army is also the kingdom of God. Christ is our King and He is also our Commander (Isa. 55:4) and our Captain (Heb. 2:10). He leads; we follow. His will, not our own, governs us. Though some would like to change this, it cannot be changed. We fight the battles; He directs us to fight. We do not choose which commands of His to keep; we keep them all.

Again, the army and the kingdom are the same.

Every one of God’s people is a citizen in the kingdom. Every citizen in the kingdom is also a soldier of Jesus Christ. Therefore, every one in the kingdom is in the army. Here, the Lord’s army differs from armies of the world. The military forces of the United States are made up of citizens who have volunteered to be specially trained to defend the country. But in the Lord’s kingdom, there are no citizens who are not soldiers. The entire citizenship makes up the army. Thus, everyone must take part in the battle. Christianity does involve some collective aspects, where the church as a whole functions, but it also is an individual endeavor. Some aspects of the war against God’s people involve a battle on the collective front, but in a very real sense, every attack that Satan advances against God’s people must be handled on the individual level. Each Christian must decide for himself where he stands. So then while preachers and elders may take a public and active role in exposing and refuting false doctrine, each Christian must decide for himself whether he will accept or reject the doctrine. While preachers and elders may teach publicly against sinful practices in the world, each Christian must choose which things he accepts and which things he does not. In the Lord’s kingdom, every citizen is a soldier and must be active in the battle against Satan.

The Lord’s army is also His family. Again, this makes the Lord’s army a little different from the armies of the world. It is true that a close camaraderie, even a family-like bond develops between soldiers when they endure the pressures of war together. But in the Lord’s army the relationship between soldiers goes far beyond a camaraderie which grows out of common experiences

and hardships. The relationship between soldiers of Christ is a real family relationship, a brother and sister relationship, not just a close bond that resembles the bond between family members. Consequently, a closeness and harmony ought to exist between God's people that is unparalleled in any earthly situation.

The fellowship that exists between Christians exists for the benefit of the entire body. If living the faithful life were an individual endeavor only, probably far fewer children of God would remain faithful. But when Christians who truly understand their relationship with fellow soldiers of Jesus Christ join hands in the battle, each has a community of fellow Christians on whom to depend, and a much stronger fight against the enemy ensues. Solomon wrote of the beauty of fellowship.

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken (Eccl. 4:9-12).

This description of the benefits of having a comrade shows the beauty of having an army which is also a family. These soldiers have an interest in their comrades that goes beyond esprit de corps, for those are more than fellow soldiers, they are family.

This relationship leads to a network of support and involvement which makes faithfulness more readily achieved. When one falls, others are there to help him up. When one is weak, stronger ones encourage and assist. When one mourns, others help to comfort. And

when this fellowship flourishes, Satan’s attacks become more difficult, for he does not attack individuals who are severed from the group. He attacks individuals who have a host of caring, concerned family members who are eager to help the one who has been attacked to fight the battle.

But the existence and effectiveness of this relationship depend upon the amount of energy and love Christians are willing to expand in developing it. If brothers and sisters in Christ are willing to allow each other to be ravaged by the enemy, then the benefits of being God’s family as well as His army will be absent. But when Christians truly love each other as Christ loved them (John 13:34-35), then they will seek to be a source of help for one another.

The body of God’s people is an army which has been called out from the world. Soldiers in the armies of today’s world may have forces outside that army which pull at their allegiance. Many look forward to the time of their discharge. Some make plans for careers after their service in the military is over. Some even hold part-time jobs while they serve. But the Lord’s army is different because it is an army of people who have been called out from the world. The command given is,

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you (II Cor. 6:17).

We who are soldiers in God’s army cannot have allegiances outside that army; there can be no love for anything in the world (I John 2:15-17).

When soldiers of Christ do not fully understand or appreciate that they have been called out from the world,

they leave themselves open to attack from Satan. If desire for the things of the world grows unchecked, that desire will alienate the soldier from the one who called him to service. Consider the Israelites in their wilderness wandering. Their desire for such things of Egypt as its fine foods caused them to murmur against the one who brought them out of unbearable slavery (Num. 11:4ff). Surely the number of those who have forsaken their Lord for the pleasures of the world is too great to count. But faithful service and a successful battle demand a sacrifice of love for the world.

God's people are special. There is no group of people which compares. But until we realize this and act according to the plan God has for us, we will not see the results God desires we see. God's people are His kingdom. Christ rules with all authority and we follow His command. God's people are His family. The relationship we have with one another is designed to help us meet the enemy together and defeat him with God's help. God's people are His church. We are called out of the world and into Christ. No longer do we live lives for selfish gain, but we crucify ourselves to allow Christ to live in us. And God's people are His army. We are enlisted in His service to fight against our enemy, the devil. When we understand what all of these descriptions imply about our relationships to God, fellow Christians, and the world, our battle against sin and Satan becomes more clear and its importance more vivid.

There is no body of people upon this earth which is more blessed than God's people. It is this body which is the culmination of God's purpose and His workings. There is no greater cause. There is no more important work. Soldiers of Christ, arise! Our battle is before us

and our foe does not rest. But because we are God’s people, we know that victory will be ours.

Endnotes

1 Joseph Henry Thayer, **Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 441.

2 W. E. Vine, “Assembly,” in **Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words**, ed. F. F. Bruce (Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1981), 83.

3 Thayer, 195-196.

4 J. E. H. Thomson, “Pharisees,” in **The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, vol. IV, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 2361.

Chapter 2

One Body ~ One Army United

Gary W. Summers



Gary presently preaches for the church in Columbia City, Indiana, but will soon be moving to Denton, Texas ~ He received his formal education from Illinois State University (B.A. and M.A.) ~ He has been a frequent speaker in gospel meetings and on lectureships in the brotherhood ~ Gary is a prolific writer, for various brotherhood publications ~ Gary and Barbara have two children.

*Upon the field of battle stands the warrior;
Prepared, He comes to fight against the foe.
Equipped is He with power and authority,
With piercing eyes of flame, and hair like snow.*

*Magnificent in splendor shines His presence.
His army, ready, waits for His command.
No danger do they sense of being bested,
Nor fear they some accurs'd, satanic band.*

*The Lord in time defeats His ev'ry enemy.
They tremble, for their destiny they know.
United, in one body, are His family,
Together they do conquer, and forth go.*

*With two-edged sword
The Lord triumphs o'er history.
His saints shall e'er rejoice
In the sweet victory.*

Introduction

There is one body (Eph. 4:4). The church which Jesus purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28) is that one body; Paul so defines it in Ephesians 1:22-23 when he affirms that God put all things under the feet of Jesus and “gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body.” **Church** and **body** are also used synonymously in Ephesians 5:23. Paul writes that Jesus is head of the church and Savior of the body. There is one body.

There is one army. The idea of an army is suggestive by the command to “put on the whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:11; I Thess. 5:8). Soldiers need armor; those engaged in battle need protection. If we are all soldiers, then we must be in someone’s army. Since we are told to “be strong in the Lord and the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10), it stands to reason that Christians must be in the Lord’s army. Just as He has one body (one church), He likewise commands only one army. The lyricist (Sabine Gould) of “Onward Christian Soldiers” apparently came to the same conclusion:

Like a mighty army,
 Moves the church of God;
Brothers, we are treading
 Where the saints have trod;

We are not divided,
 All one body we,
One in hope and doctrine,
 One in charity.

There is one army.

The one body, the one army is united.

And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest
them which do such things, and doest the

same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? (Rom. 2:3).

For decades we have pointed to the disunity caused by denominationalism and contrasted it with God's design for unity. We have recalled the tender plea of Jesus for all of His disciples to be one (John 17:20-21); we have shown that division is carnal (I Cor. 3:1-4) and how that Paul pleaded for brethren to be "joined together in the same mind and the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10); dare we be anything less than fully committed to unity amongst ourselves, lest we fall under the condemnation of Romans 2:3, cited above? We are one body, one army – united.

Prerequisites Of Unity

Humility. Soldiers must remember whose army it is. Ambition creates problems with peers and can easily lead a person into sin. James and John openly sought positions of prominence in the kingdom. Their request caused the other ten to be "moved with indignation" (Matt. 20:24). Jesus closed out this episode by pointing out that greatness is not achieved through dominion but through service (vs. 25-28).

We are not masters but servants. The desire for preeminence produces ungodly men like Diotrephes (III John 9-10), elders who fear not to draw away disciples after themselves (Acts 20:28-30), and Pharisees who chose to crucify the innocent Son of God rather than be persuaded of His deity by the evidence of the miracles (John 11:45-52; Acts 4:16-17). Many believe that the desire for exaltation caused the downfall of Satan.

Jesus heads His army; He commands the troops. Christians must recognize that He sustains us and

provides for us everything we need.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing (John 15:5).

Jesus gives the orders; we fellow-soldiers obey. We stand in the power of His might (Eph. 6:10). Humility toward our Lord and a view of equality toward one another are prerequisites to unity.

Knowledge. “Who’s in charge of this outfit?” is the first question most soldiers want to determine when they enlist (or are drafted). The Bible provides the answer to every pertinent question: what’s the commander like, what does He expect of us, etc.?

The Word of God explains everything we need to know about our Lord and what our code of conduct must be. It further defines the enemy and what goals we have as an army. If we all study the same manual, and follow it, we will achieve unity in the ranks.

Love. A soldier may know the Book backward and forward but still have an attitude problem. In most armies someone will behave in an insubordinate way. One fellow always has a chip on his shoulder and is constantly picking fights with those around him. Unity cannot flourish in such an atmosphere.

Consider brethren in Corinth. They *knew* a great deal—enough to become filled with pride, in fact (I Cor. 8:1). But their actions belied any semblance of love for each other. Their lack of love was the foundation of their division (chaps. 1-4), their going to law with one another (chap. 6), their refusal to give up their rights (chaps. 8-10), their selfishness during the Lord’s Supper (chap. 11), and their rudeness in the exercising of spiritual

gifts (chaps. 12-14).

For the Lord's army to succeed, love and mutual respect for one another must abound. Affirming that we have undying love for our commander will not suffice,

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (I John 4:20).

Love for one another in the Lord's spiritual body must be as genuine as the love for each member in our own physical body. Not only is such love the means by which the world can identify us as His disciples (John 13:34-35), love brings about cooperation and unity within the body.

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (Eph. 4:16).

The Basis Of Unity

Unity is not just a desirable concept; it is essential, and there are a number of reasons for it. Consider Ephesians 4:1-6. Paul beseeches brethren in verse one "to have a walk worthy of" their calling. He then makes reference to humility and properties of love (discussed above). A worthy walk includes lowliness (the opposite of the desire for pre-eminence), gentleness, longsuffering, and bearing with one another (consider I Cor. 13:4-7).

"Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be likeminded toward one another..." (Rom. 15:5).

God bears with us, knowing what we can become; can we treat each other with any less consideration? Just as we are to forgive one another based on the fact that God forgives us (Matt. 18:21-35), for the same reason we must be patient with each other. Love (and the desire for unity) demands it.

“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). The soldiers of Christ battle an enemy—Satan. He is God’s adversary as well as ours. His purpose is to cause disunity and dissension within the ranks. He continues to have more success than he deserves—because the church has not been vigilant enough to preserve unity. Discord among soldiers must be quelled early on. There will always be differences and friction among human beings—even spiritually-minded ones (Acts 15:36-41); they must be resolved in a spirit of love and humility.

Christians possess a common ground: we believe in one God; we serve but one Lord; the Christian soldiers’ one manual (containing identical instructions for all of us) was authored by one Spirit; we all became Christians in the same way—trusting in the same Lord, repenting of sins, and being baptized for the forgiveness of our sins, in which the same blood of the same Lord cleansed us and made us pure; we share that salvation in common; we were all taught the same doctrine; we possess the same spiritual blessings; we are all heirs together of eternal life (Eph. 4:4-6; Jude 3; II Peter 1:3; Eph. 1:3; Rev. 1:5; I Cor. 12:13; Matt. 28:19; I Peter 1:3-9).

We were washed, sanctified, and justified by Jesus (I Cor. 6:9-11); we are one bread and one body; we all commune with the same Lord (I Cor. 10:16-17); we all contend for the same faith (Jude 3); we all serve in the

same army. The church of our Lord is truly unique. We may be male or female, rich or poor, from every nation under heaven, but we are all one in Christ Jesus. No group of people anywhere at any time has ever had so much upon which to be united. We are the church of Christ, the body of Christ, the army of our Lord, the temple of our God, the bride of Christ, the kingdom of Christ, the family of God.

Causes Of Disunity

With all of the above factors in our favor, one would think the church was safe; nevertheless diseases invade the Lord's body, thus affecting its health and soundness. The ultimate source of these afflictions is Satan, whose arsenal includes a wide variety of weapons, all aimed at covering the entire body (as Job possessed sores throughout). He has targeted women, seducing them out of their God-given roles; he sends youth leaders, weaned on the NIV to corrupt our children; he convinces many to rebel against the authority of the elders (if any will even take the lead); he causes material prosperity to be a stumblingblock to all; he attacks the Word of God unashamedly (even through college professors in "our" universities); he inspires false worship concepts (in the spirit of Cain, Nadab, and Abihu); he exalts worldliness; he devalues sound doctrine; he obfuscates God's plan of salvation; he discourages even the faithful. The devil is truly our enemy.

Disunity is caused by those who want their own following (Acts 20:28-30). The church needs leaders who will follow the Bible and give Christ the glory. A certain type of individual, however, wants his own glory. The only way he can get it is by inventing some new

doctrine—or reviving an old heresy (ala Max King, following in the path of Hymenaeus and Philetus—II Tim. 2:17-18). Or he may receive honor from men whom he has granted indulgences to sin while affirming their faithfulness to the Lord (ala Olan Hicks). How appropriate the description of such men...

For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error (II Peter 2:18).

Still others are willing to compromise and have fellowship with false religion, as Jehoshaphat did with Ahab (I Kings 22:4; II Chron. 19:2). Today, Rubel Shelly (following in the footsteps of Ketcherside and Garrett) seeks ecumenical fellowship with those not in the body of Christ; Max Lucado likewise seeks denominational fellowship through the printed page (as well as in person); and Carroll Osburn seeks to impress denominational scholars with his works. Never have so many given up so much for so little. Men like these, in their pursuit of individual glory, have denied the Lord who bought them. The church cannot fellowship such men who have broken ranks and deserted to the enemy. Yet we do not hate them, but rather the evil to which they have succumbed.

Disunity is caused by a failure to study the book. The Word of God has been revealed; if we devote ourselves to understanding the Scriptures, we should be united. To be sure, there are some things hard to be understood (II Peter 3:16), but most division does not come over the intricate passages but those that are fairly easy to comprehend. (Consider the denominational

world's problem with Acts 2:38, for example. The force of the passage is clear; a person must work diligently to avoid accepting the obvious truth.)

Disunity is caused by spiritual immaturity.

Consider Corinth, a church about which division is the first topic Paul concerns himself. Members were selfish, proud, envious, petty, and inconsiderate of one another. Paul's solution for them was to feast upon a healthy portion of love.

Some had such callous disregard for their brethren that they would rather exercise their "rights" than consider the feelings of others in the congregation. Paul takes them to task for eating meats offered to idols by asking them, "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died" (I Cor. 8:11). (Were these the same ones who refused to tarry for their brethren at the Lord's table, I Cor. 11:33)? Brethren ought to be considerate of one another's views and forego rights when necessary.

The opposite extreme occurred in Galatia—some had opinions (not Christian doctrine) they wanted to bind on all others. At least in their case, the mistake is understandable. Jews had been taught circumcision, dietary laws, and other portions of the law all their lives. Naturally, they would want to continue those teachings. They failed to learn that they were no longer under the old covenant—that Christianity did not include the same laws. A lifetime of teaching is not easily surrendered.

What hurts the church today, however, is that various opinions arising from man's fertile imaginations are regarded as gospel, then required of every "faithful" church member. At least the errors of the Judaizing teachers were couched in historical precedent. Their

modern day counterparts have made demands upon the whole church without any foundation whatsoever. Soldiers have no authority to fight amongst themselves. “But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (Gal. 5:15).

Which is which? When should legitimate rights be given up to keep from wounding a conscience, and when should the church move forward despite complaints of “unscriptural practices”?

1. Would giving up the practice cause harm to anyone? If brethren can relinquish their rights for the sake of harmony, why not do so? After additional study, perhaps the activity could be restored.
2. Would giving up the practice interrupt a good Scriptural work that benefits the church? No one has a right to put a stop to the spreading of the gospel or any other work of the church.
3. Is something being required that the Bible does not command? Things such as the binding of circumcision upon everyone cannot be allowed.
4. Is fellowship being disrupted over something that does not involve a “thus saith the Lord”? If the Bible allows freedom on a matter, so must we. Opinions cannot dominate and rule in the absence of Scripture.
5. Is love being exercised? Do we criticize a perceived opponent for what we would overlook in a friend? We tend to be tolerant toward those we love but harsh toward them concerning which we have no emotional

ties. But all that we do should be prompted by an attitude of love and our commitment to unity (Rom. 2:3).

What causes most strife and division? It results from the carnal mind, not from spiritual maturity (I Cor. 3:3). It is just as wrong to consider a brother's error (whether oral or written) intentional and to conclude he is a false teacher as it is to be unconcerned about false doctrine at all.

There are some who are quick to make just about every matter a fellowship issue. Fellowship is a Scriptural concept, and the New Testament determines those to whom it is extended or withheld (II John 9-11). And it is true that in the church today the greater problem is the reluctance of many brethren to withdraw fellowship from those morally and doctrinally astray.

But it is equally wrong to remove fellowship swiftly from others who only hold a different viewpoint on a non-crucial matter. A few years ago, at Freed-Hardeman there was a forum which considered the best translation of *monogenes*. Those on either side of "only begotten" made it clear that this difference was not a matter of fellowship. Some in the assembly wanted to withdraw from those who favored "unique" because they apparently considered them false teachers, which is ludicrous. Both sides believed strongly in the deity of Jesus and have devoted their lives to the spreading of the gospel. It was simply a legitimate question concerning the correct translation of the Greek word.

Some others have made statements in recent years that they could not fellowship those who used any other translation than the King James. Now while there are many bad paraphrases and some objectionable

translations (such as the RSV and the NIV), there are one or two other good ones besides the King James. How tragic to make a matter of fellowship a translation that has only been around 400 years of the 1950 years of the church’s existence! What must our Lord think of us?

The Results Of Disunity

It does not take an overactive imagination to foresee what will happen to an army fighting and squabbling within itself. IT CANNOT SUCCEED! As evidence, the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is cited. What caused the downfall of the great city? Ultimately, it was the unrepentant sins of the Jews, as described by Jesus in Matthew 23:35-38. But even as the Roman army approached the city, warring factions within could not resist fighting one another. Josephus gives the following account.

...there arose a treacherous person, a man of Gischala, the son of Levi, whose name was John...He was a ready liar, and yet very sharp in gaining credit to his fictions; he thought it a point of virtue to delude people... (635).

This John gained control of the city of Jerusalem but was a thoroughly evil man. His men searched the houses of the rich, murdered men, and abused women—“it was sport to them” (691).

And now there arose another war at Jerusalem. There was a son of Giora, one Simon... (688).

Now this Simon, who was without the wall, was a greater terror to the people than the Romans themselves (691).

This second man, Simon was admitted into the city in order to overthrow John (691). But upon gaining entrance to the city with his army, “he took care to secure his own authority, and looked upon those who invited him” to be now his enemies (691).

As Titus advanced to the wall of the city, would these two commanders join forces in an effort to save the city? Simon controlled the upper city; John held the temple. Would there be a united front so that they could all be saved?

...this internal sedition did not cease even when the Romans were encamped near their very walls...they never suffered anything that was worse from the Romans than they made each other suffer (709).

As amazing as it seems, both Simon and John were hostile to each other until the end; worse than that, they had weakened the city tremendously through their high-handed treatment of the city’s inhabitants. Jerusalem had become a place without internal justice. The results of this disunity was ignominious defeat.

Can any army expect to be victorious if the soldiers busy themselves attacking one another instead of devoting themselves to the enemy? Success never comes to those who are bitter, divisive, petty, or quarrelsome. Perhaps the Lord’s army has not advanced in the last thirty years because we have not only been “at ease” in Zion but engaged in hostile maneuvers toward one another. It is time to leave off futile bickering and contentiousness; we must gird ourselves for future fights. It is past time for the army of God to mobilize in an all-out assault against the enemy, submitting ourselves to our commander’s orders.

The Vision Of A United Army

Imagine what could be accomplished if across this nation brethren would begin to march together! One of the first enemies to conquer is lethargy. Soldiers in the Lord’s army need to consume a daily dose of zeal to counteract the comforts of materialism which have distracted us. The world should marvel at the energy God’s people possess. “Soldiers of Christ, arise, and put your armor on.”

This great spiritual army subsists not on mere physical food but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). Once aroused and in battle formation, this evangelistic force could sweep across this country in a fashion not observed in decades. There would be conversations in the work place, Bible studies in the homes, and fervent, daily prayers offered up as we battle for people’s souls. Like our spiritual forefathers, we would go everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4), and the number of disciples would be growing and multiplying.

At the forefront of the march (and lifted high) the banner of truth. The Word of God must be exalted to the degree that there is a moral impact upon this world. Because of the victories of the army of God in conquering men’s hearts and our advocacy of Biblical morality, abortion clinics would shut their doors; pornography publishers would be bankrupted; homosexuals would not be granted special rights by the courts; the news media would learn to ignore NOW-type feminists; creation could be taught in the nation’s schools once again; in fact, parents would be allowed to control the curriculum instead of the NEA; politicians would quit giving away

money that is not theirs; people would vote like they did in the election of 1994; gambling would become illegal again; the need for divorce lawyers would cease; drug dealers would have no market; the few who would dare to be criminals would be tried swiftly and if convicted punished; children would not be abused or abandoned; and religious denominations would shrink because of people clamoring to become part of the Lord's church!

This army would never grow complacent but would be ever-vigilant (I Peter 5:8). It would continue to watch for new threats to the church, the home, and the nation. Sentries would also guard against ambitious soldiers within who wanted their own following. Love and unity would once again characterize the people of God. And all of these things would be accomplished by the power of His might (Eph. 6:10).

The Crucial Attitude

In the course of counseling with couples with troubled marriages we have generally pointed out that divorce cannot be considered an option. No matter what the differences, no matter how much anger there is, no matter how badly feelings have been hurt, there must be a commitment to resolve the problems and maintain the marriage. Such is a difficult path to pursue but necessary, for God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16).

We need to have the same level of commitment in the church to unity that we expect others to have toward unity in marriage. Satan is our avowed enemy, and he will stop at nothing to destroy brotherly unity. We must pray for wisdom to prevent him from causing such disruptions in the body. May we commit ourselves to each other's spiritual well-being and be sure that our

actions reflect the love Jesus has for His one body, the church. May our energies be directed toward serving Jesus (as well as one another, Gal. 5:13) and fighting Satan. Let the words of the song describe us,

Like a mighty army,
 moves the church of God;
Brothers, we are treading
 Where the saints have trod;
We are not divided,
 All one body we,
One in hope and doctrine,
 One in charity.

Endnotes

1 All quotations are from **The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume**. Hendrickson: Peabody, MA, 1987.

Chapter 3

Our Commander In Chief: Jesus Christ

James Watkins



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By way of definition, a commander is one who commands, a leader. In the United States Navy, a Commander ranks above a Lieutenant Commander and below a Captain. When, however, we use the expression **Commander in Chief** we refer to the ultimate authority. President Harry S. Truman gave us a fair concept of the idea with his desk sign that simply read: “The buck stops here.”

Webster’s dictionary defines “Chief” as “The Head.” Thus Commander in Chief is the top ranking position. With the declaration of war, there must be centralized authority. In these United States the formal declaration of war automatically elevates the President to the supreme position of Commander in Chief.

Today there is a war raging with infinitely greater consequences than the destiny of nations. The spoil is measured in terms of the eternal welfare of the immortal souls of men. The Commander in Chief over the forces

of righteousness is **Jesus Christ**. Note the divine declarations:

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:19-23).

This confirms, once and for all, the supreme authority of our Commander in Chief. If one is “far above” all rule, authority, dominion and power and declared to be above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come, where would one find such ultimate power? He is Commander in Chief of the only force in this world waging war against Satan and sin. He is head over all things to the church.

An endearing factor, relative to the supremacy of our Lord, is that He came up through the ranks. Note Paul’s statement concerning Him:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above

every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:6-11).

This exaltation of Christ is embodied in a statement found in Hebrews 5:8-9:

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

The expression, “having been made perfect” does not suggest imperfections or defects in the Son of God but rather speaks of His divine right to the position of Commander in Chief. Through His manhood, by His servitude, in His total acquiescence to the will of God (Heb. 10:7), by the things which He suffered, He became the only candidate for the position. During this perfecting, molding period, He set the perfect example for living, for all men for all time to come. He took upon Himself flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14). He sat where we sit. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). We thus learn that, not only does He direct the affairs of our hearts and the labor of our hands, but He earlier demonstrated in simple, practical form, the motive and direction of both. As Commander in Chief, He requires that I rejoice as a strong man, prepared for battle, when confronted with many temptations (James 1:2-4); yet, as the humble carpenter from Galilee, very much human, He shows me how to do it.

When Satan confronted Him, following His forty days of fasting, He was at His weakest point, physically. His greatest material need was for physical sustenance. The devil is a master craftsman in the area of subtlety and deception. Casting reflection upon the Lord’s claims, he taunts, “If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” Jesus, our Commander in Chief, when made perfect by the things which He suffered, would have known, even at this early stage of His earthly ministry, that an army “fights on its stomach.” What could possibly be wrong with supplying food through the exercise of His miraculous power? A simple, though vital, lesson is learned from our perfect Lord. He who would fight the good fight of faith is committed to his Commander in Chief, heart, soul, and body. The true soldier never follows the lead of Satan. The only power through which to resist him is utilized by our Lord on this occasion:

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4).

Controlling the physical appetite is not the only task with which frail man is confronted, and our Commander in Chief understands this, first hand. The devil appealed to the pride of life and the lust for power through the acquisition of all that which the eye can see. In His response to Satan, in all these areas, He established the bench mark of perfection, “It is written.”

Our Commander in Chief does not direct His forces by means of superior power and absolute, unfeeling authority. He heard Him saying, through the inspired Paul,

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25).

Such bespeaks a caring love, a superior authority that condescends, in tenderness, to meet the needs of frail humanity. Such is in evidence when He speaks to the woman taken in the act of adultery. We know the destructive nature of this terrible sin. We hear the Lord's denunciation of it in such passages as Matthew 15:19; 19:3-9, yet He said to her:

...Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more (John 8:11).

We thus learn of His compassion; we see the value of a precious soul. From this simple example we learn that it is not so much where one has been or what one may have been doing, but rather, who you are and what you can become by the power of God.

While our Lord, in every way, has exemplified for us the joy and blessedness of a life of self denial, service and compassion we are not to assume that the title, Commander in Chief is an honorary designation. It was He who said:

...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6).

Note His employment of the definite article. Before Him, beyond Him or in addition to Him, there is none. He alone is the Savior of mankind. In His loving, tender appeal, He said,

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world (John 12:47).

His mission was, and is, to save the lost. Lest, however, one erroneously assume that the rejection of His Word carries no penalty, He continued:

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

His Word, as Commander in Chief, is absolute authority. He appeals through love, but it is our loving obedience to His Word, appropriating the benefits made available by His grace, that brings to fruition our hopes and dreams. He is indeed the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him (Heb. 5:9). The apostle Paul tells us, without apology, that,

...God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel (Rom. 2:16).

There are numerous, simple passages in God’s Word that need little explanation.

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (II Thess. 1:7-9).

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31).

For our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29).

These all teach us that, while He reaches out to us in love, as Commander in Chief, He is the ultimate authority.

Chapter 4

Lift High His Royal Banner!

Dan Winkler



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There's a war going on!

- The grit of battle rests beneath your fingernails and deep in the pore of your skin.
- The want of hygiene, the smell of gunpowder, and—most horribly—the stench of death, siphon away the fresh air of a clear morning.
- The loss of innocence has erased your smile, and robbed you of the sound of your own laughter.
- The loss of life haunts the privacy of your dreams with the nightmare of an enemy's cry, a comrades last moments, and the memory of their eyes. Their eyes...locked into place and stunned by the imminence of their own death...if you could just erase the memory of their eyes.

You have forgotten the ideologies of heart and philosophies of mind behind all the madness. There are too many scars for you to care anymore. Now, all that matters is survival. You just get up in the morning and make it through another day, so you can wrestle with

the torment of another night. Empty on the inside, your soul has been cored and quartered by the two-edged blade of man's barbarism. And that...because...there's a war going on!

Ugly scene is it not? But even worse are the spiritual battles we have been called on to fight. For,

...our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities...the powers...the world, rulers of this darkness...the spiritual host of wickedness (Eph. 6:12, ASV).

The war we must fight is endless in duration and eternal in consequence. It is truth against error; right versus wrong; spirituality or carnality; light or darkness; the church in conflict with the world, even the religious world; you and I fight against one whose heart is blacker than the hell that will engulf his eternity...the devil (I Peter 5:18).

At stake is the future of our spiritual heritage, the stability of our own children's faith, and the destiny of souls...the destiny...of souls. We cannot afford to rest or retreat. We must faithfully serve our Lord and ***"Lift High His Royal Banner."*** It must not suffer loss.

Such being true, let us briefly focus on a few of the battles we are currently fighting and, then, suggest a strategy that could help us "fight the good fight of faith" (II Tim. 6:12) as "a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 2:3).

I. Some Of The "Battles" We Fight

The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God...casting down

imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:4-5).

The battles we fight are conceptual in nature. Our challenge is to change people’s thoughts, so we can change their theology. We must change their minds (study the Greek term for “repent”), before they will pay any mind to what they teach, feel, decide, or do.

Currently, we are faced with a variety of conceptual battles. For convenience, we will place them into four arenas of thought: Our “imbalance,” our “individualism...” our “innovations,” and our “identity.”

1. Our “IMBALANCE.” At Corinth, some were saying, “I am of Paul,” while others were saying, “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Apollos” (I Cor. 1:12). Now Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles who, due to their heathen background, could have been given to the extreme of libertinism. Peter was an apostle to the Jews who, with their background, were given to the rigidity and restraint of legalism. Apollos was from Alexandria (Acts 18:24), a center for scholarship, which was reputed to have “intellectualized” Christianity. *Liberalism! Legalism! Intellectualism!* They plagued Corinth and, unfortunately, this same imbalanced partyism disturbs our peace, calling us to battle.

Liberalism. Such is that which minimizes truth and broadens fellowship to those with whom God has no spiritual affinity. Under the banner of “academic freedom,” everything is being challenged (excuse me, “rethought”...?), everything from the twenty-four hour days of creation, to the existence of hell...from the dancing of our youth, to the social drinking of our

corporate executives...from the Bible's definition of adultery, to its decisive position on fellowship with fornicators. Convictions of old have been conveniently staged on the polemic platform as proposition for debate. In the meanwhile, error and immorality are ignored while such brethren are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 3:7). What ever happened to Balaam's sentiment?

I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah, to do either good or bad of mine own mind (Num. 24:13; cf. I Cor. 4:6).

Legalism. Such is that which cramps the truth of Scripture into narrow, opinionated channels of thought, and restricts fellowship from those God loving cradles. Under the guise of faithfulness and conservatism, individuals are suspicioned until they prove themselves "orthodox"...guilty until proven innocent. Don't believe it! Try voicing a word about various translations of the Bible, or the use of church buildings, or your support of a Christian University. Just try to "think-out-loud" in reference to some innovative methodology (that is, a change in our "methods" without a compromise of our "message"). In fact, if something does not ring in harmony with parochial traditions or personal thoughts of some, it is to be viewed with caution and reviewed with criticism (even if it is right, good, and expedient...it is just different). And what did Jesus say about this mind set?

Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20; cf. Eccl. 7:16).

Intellectualism. Such idolizes some and ostracizes

others based on education. Supposedly, one’s experience in the arena of *academia*, sets him above the common mind as a self-made (more accurately, “self-proclaimed”) expert. Consequently, the worth of an individual’s contribution to the church is governed by his academic pedigree and where he attained it. Such has incited pride, fed egotism, destroyed self-esteem, and warranted the wrath of God’s disgust. In the church, we all have a place of equal importance with varying roles (I Cor. 12:14-27). Indeed, “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (I Cor. 3:19).

2. Our “INDIVIDUALISM.” Since the 1960’s, with its free love, communes, flower children, and such, efforts to broaden the base of social liberalism have been more vocal and more visible. Fueled by secular humanism, man and his needs have become the primary concern of many. Still further, the individual’s wants or thoughts have become the standard for ethical and religious decisions. Such manifests itself in the *pluralism*, *relativism*, and *pragmatism* that serve to disturb our peace in the church, and call us to battle.

Pluralism. Also known as “political correctness,” pluralism tells us that we have a right to our values, but we have not the right to enforce those values on others. Because of this message, homosexuality has become more acceptable; abortion, more prevalent; euthanasia, more than a debate position; and fornication, a matter of choice between two consenting adults...all because we are told that man has the political right to his own thoughts and life style. But wait a minute. We are not talking about “rights.” We are talking about that which is “right!” Remember, “the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23).

The Word of God, used properly, is the standard by which we “discern good and evil” (Heb. 5:14).

Relativism. An offspring of “political correctness” is a supposed want of absolutes. Since one set of ethics is as good as the other (a matter of preference to the pluralist), everything becomes relevant. No absolutes (!)? We, therefore, have no right to pass judgment on those who differ with us. Not so! “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). Today’s liberal ethicist would stop there and tell us that man is entitled to that which seems right to him. But what does the Holy Spirit go on to say in these same verses?

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Sounds like a judgment call based on absolutes, does it not? How we need to “buy the truth, and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23). It is the truth that makes us free (John 8:32).

Pragmatism. “If it works, it’s right!” is the motto of pragmatism. Such sentiment is readily seen in the unhealthy concept of “growing” a church. Church growth has become the cause, the purpose, and the mission of some. Decisions are even based on whether or not the decision contributes to growth. Such has fallen right in step with the pluralism and relativism of the day, and caused some to avoid various subjects...dancing, drinking, drugs, divorce, denominationalism, don’t in general, damnation (the “Dirty D’s”)...because they are too controversial. Too counterproductive. Shame! Shame! Jesus took a controversial stand in defense of His Father’s will...even to the offense of those who heard. When confronted about His opponent’s feelings, He said,

“Let them alone: they are blind guides” (Matt. 15:3,12-14). Someone should have told our Lord that that was no way to win friends and influence people. And what about the time He offended the “crowds” with His message, yea, to the point they all left (John 6)? Was that counterproductive? Was He wrong?

3. Our “INNOVATIONS.” Trying to reach the “Baby Boomers” or the “Baby Busters”/“Generation X”/the “13 Generation,” has encouraged some to call for drastic changes in the church; i.e., *an evasive approach to scripture*, an *“expanded role for various ones*, and the need for *more exciting (?) worship services*. But their cry for a change in methods has been subtly impregnated with a call for a change of our message. Their efforts have, thus, disturbed our peace and called us to battle.

An “evasive” approach to the Bible. A “new hermeneutic” tells us that the Bible is not a law, a legal brief, a constitution, but a love letter that is subject to a more lucid, less rigid interpretation. Such is nothing more than a scholastic ploy (and not a very clever or original one) to warrant a less definitive, less offensive stand on matters of doctrine. In reality, the Bible is a book of redemption (cf. Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 15:1-2; II Tim. 3:15-17; James 1:21) from the love of God (Acts 20:24-32) which constitutes a law (Rom. 3:27; 8:2; Gal. 6:2; James 1:25) that must be obeyed for salvation to be received and enjoyed (Matt. 7:21; II Thess. 1:7-9; Heb. 5:8-9). We must, therefore, cautiously handle aright the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). Those who would give it a loose interpretation to support false doctrine or immoral conduct, are warned that “the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest...scriptures, unto their own destruction” (II Peter 3:16).

“Expanded” roles. For example, the strong social conscience of our day coupled with the pragmatism mentioned earlier, has led some to march in cadence with “Christendom’s” social gospel. An expanded role for the church is suggested, in that we are to be some sort of a second incarnation of the Lord and reach out to those hurting. In response, we are to definitely be a people who care (Luke 8:36), but is that the church’s true mission (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16)? Still further, our culture, has improved greatly in its view of women. But, since we are told there are “no absolutes,” and since we should “go with what produces growth,” some have allowed cultural tendencies to author expanded roles for women...even into positions where they could or would have to exercise authority over men. Such is encouraged, even though the Lord strictly forbids it (I Tim. 2:11-14; I Peter 3:3-6). And, then, the Holy Spirit is being attributed mystical powers of illumination and guidance beyond His endeavors of providence and the guidance He offers solely through His Word (Rom. 8:2,6,14; cf. II Peter 1:3). Such appeals to man’s need to connect with God and pragmatically falls right in line with the Calvinistic overtones of these “change agent” innovators wish to fellowship.

A more “exciting” worship service. More exciting by whose standards? Are we to be impressed by our own feelings in worship, or are we to express our feelings to God in worship...as he prescribes (John 4:24; Rev. 22:8-9)? Still, “pattern theology” is scoffed, cultural norms are studied, and worship has been relegated to the personal preference of the times, or the location. Therefore, sound gospel preaching is being replaced by drama presentations (Hollywood has become more

important than holy writ). The debate over instrumental music has been ushered into the realm of opinion and, to these innovators, if you stand against its use, you are being devisive, judgmental, and legalistic. Even though we are to worship God “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24; cf. 17:17). For these folks personal preference has replaced divine precept for the standard which dictates the constituents of acceptable worship. Maybe we need to go back and study the deaths of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1ff).

4. Our “IDENTITY.” As members of the church that belongs to Christ (Acts 20:28; Rom. 16:16; Titus 2:4), we are the *ekklesia*, the “called out” ones. But this exclusive principle is offensive to the broad agenda of some, as outlined up to this point, We are, thus, being faced with a variety of ecumenical slants...relating to *the church*, *the gospel* and *the grace of God*—which disturb our peace and call us to battle.

One’s concept of the church. From the idea that there are devout, faithful Christians in all denominations, we are hearing more and more about one’s “world view” and how we should be less exclusive in our thoughts. The New Testament church of our Lord is, thus, being presented as a product of the Restoration Movement—not the Lord’s work on Pentecost (Acts 2). Consequently, it is placed, in concept, side by side with “Christ-honoring believers” in the denominational world (or so they are termed). Such a view flagrantly and falsely sees the Church of Christ as nothing more than a church among churches, just a part of the corporate body of Jesus. How does this concept mesh with the Lord’s own condemnation of “Christ-honoring believers” whose religion was not that of His Father (Matt. 7:21-

23)? Or the Holy Spirit's condemnation of those who fervently served God in a religion other than God's (Rom. 10:1-3)? Or Paul's desire to possess a righteousness in keeping with God's plan, instead of a righteousness contrived by man (Phil. 3:8-9)?

One's concept of the gospel. A "core-gospel"—emphasizing the birth, life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus—is being promoted by those of ecumenical wishes. One's faith in Jesus is the true test of fellowship to those who espouse this concept. Doctrine, especially that which is controversial and condemnatory, is thought to be inconsequential. Come now! Read the last three books penned by Paul (I Tim.; II Tim.; Titus). Underline the words "doctrine," "teaching," and "instruction." Read the writings of John (II John in particular), and underline his use of the words "truth," "commandment(s)," "doctrine," and "teaching." Engage in this exercise of study, compare what the Bible says about some "core gospel," and be warned:

Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of (the "truth," the "commandments," the "doctrine" from) Christ, hath not God (II John 9).

One's concept of grace. An elastic, almost all-sufficient, grace is being offered by folks who view the church as a denomination among denominations, promoting a "core gospel." To them, baptism no longer has to be for the remission of sins, yea, to be saved. One must simply be baptized to obey God, whether they understand its purpose or not. Grace will take care of the misunderstanding, if it's really all that important (?). This concept of grace would also allow "open membership" with the pious unimmersed as they were

called at the turn of the century. If not, why not? NOTE: nothing is more wonderful than the thought of God’s amazing mercy, love, and kindness...His grace (Eph. 2:4-7). But we are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8), and that faith is identified for us as the kind of faith Abraham had (Rom. 3:21–4:12,16)—a faith that obeys (cf. Heb. 11:8)! To obey, of course, is to do what God says, the way God says (Deut. 4:1-2; Josh. 1:7; I Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22:18-19). We are, thus, saved by grace—that is, we receive all of its riches, its benefits—when we obey God’s commandments out of a submissive faith. To maintain His favor and continue to enjoy its benefits, we must continue to obey His commandments or, else, we will have received His grace in vain (II Cor. 6:1) having fallen from the same (Gal. 5:4; Heb. 6:4-6).

II. A Suggested Strategy, “Battle Plan”

Having mentioned some of the battles we are currently having to fight, might we suggest a plan of action, a strategy to employ in our quest for victory?

First, we must remain “FOCUSED.” The moral challenges of our hedonistic society have caused some to view denominationalism as less a threat than it has been in days past. Such has, no doubt, contributed to some of the ecumenical endeavors already alluded to. But the words of Jesus, “Beware of false prophets” (Matt. 7:15), are forever relevant.

We must never forget who we are:

...an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession...who in time past were no people, but now are the

people of God: who had not obtained mercy,
but now have obtained mercy (I Peter 2:9-10).

We must never forget why we are here: to glorify God (Matt. 5:16; I Cor. 10:31) in our efforts to live like Jesus (Phil. 2:5; I Peter 2:21) and manifest His glory (II Cor. 3:18). We must, equally, never forget what we are to do: seek and save the lost (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; cf. Luke 19:10). Nothing done or taught should take from our identity, reflect adversely on our purpose, nor mute our message of evangelism!

Second, we must stand—even if we stand alone—on the solid “FOUNDATION” of truth! Ever noticed the strong connection between the Christian’s “armor of God” (Eph. 6:11-18) and “the word of God”? We are to gird our loins with “truth,” but God’s word is truth (John 17:17). We are to put on the breastplate of “righteousness,” but God’s commandments are righteousness (Psm. 119:172). We are to shod our feet with the preparation of “the gospel,” but God’s word is the gospel (I Peter 1:25). We are to take up the shield of “faith,” but God’s word is the source of faith (Rom. 10:17). We are to take up the helmet of “salvation,” but God’s word is His power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16; cf. I Cor. 15:1-2). Too, we are to fight with the sword of the Spirit which is “the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).

Interestingly, this same context which alerts us to the panoply of God, uses the word “stand”/“withstand” no less than four times. We are to be a force to reckon with, an army. We are to move the world, not be moved by the world. We are to have a positive impact on culture, not allow culture to have a negative impact on us. At times we will have to “dig in” and use the word from a defensive posture (cf. Phil. 1:7,16). At other times, we

will be blessed to “take up arms” and offensively march for our Master (cf. Acts 1:8). Whichever be the case, the “firm foundation” on which we stand and with which we fight must forever be the “word of truth” (cf. II Tim. 2:15-19)!

Third, we must rely on Jesus as the “FULCRUM” that keeps us balanced! No one of proper attitude appreciates labels for the sake of labels. Too, most all would see themselves as balanced in contrast to certain others.

But how do we know if we are balanced and not influenced by extremes? Jesus is the secret. We must do only what He would do (Phil. 2:5; I Peter 2:21; cf. I Cor. 11:1; Gal. 2:20) and teach only what He taught by personal proclamation (John 12:48-50) or the Holy Spirit’s revelation (Eph. 1:20-23; 3:3-5). Said balance is essential to our quest for victory according to the charge:

Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Make level the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil (Prov. 4:25-27).

Finally, we must be willing and ready to “FIGHT.” There is a time to discuss and deliberate; but, there always comes a time to decide, and demonstrate our loyalty. To do so, we suggest four thoughts of interest that deserve consideration.

Local leadership. Elderships are responsible for tending the autonomous congregation they oversee (I Peter 5:1-4). Today’s church, thankfully, is blessed with a multitude of great men who serve well in this capacity, keeping their fingers on the pulse of our brotherhood,

ever alert to the challenges we face. Nothing is more devastating to our cause than men who fail in this area and serve as elders that are willing to “sell out” to the enemy. Of such Paul emphatically warned (Acts 20:28-30). We need local leaderships who are faithful to the cause, compassionate in character, and informed in their concepts, directing their brethren to be the same.

Regional pulpits. There have been and always will be men who espouse error to their own destruction (II Peter 2:1). Informed elderships know some of our enemy’s key generals by name. They would also be privy to those in their area that are leaning toward extremes or actually preaching that which is not right. Being responsible for their own autonomous congregation, they can have little impact on the preaching of other congregations. However, they can determine not to invite men of question from the region (or from any where else) to fill their pulpits “for any endeavor.” Such falls right in line with the sentiment of Paul warning Timothy about “Hymenaeus and Alexander” (I Tim. 1:19-20) or “Hymenaeus and Philetus” (II Tim. 2:16-18)!

“Universal remnant.” No matter how frustrating the battle, no matter how hopeless the future may seem, we can always be encouraged to know that seven thousand have not bowed to Baal. There is a remnant (study carefully the emphasis of Rom. 11:1-5) that remains true—and it is probably much larger than we realize. A great deal of publicity usually accompanies those who forsake the “old paths.” With said publicity, we might be encouraged to think that “all is lost.” Not so! Remember, the captain of Paul, Peter, James, and John, is the same captain of our faith—Jesus (Heb. 5:8,19; 12:2). Think of the battles—against, seemingly,

insurmountable odds—he won through them. We should also be encouraged to know that those who are “ever learning, and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth” shall, ultimately “proceed no further; for their folly shall be evident unto all men” (II Tim. 3:7,9)!

Brotherhood fellowship. Without belaboring this point, it is time we rediscovered those verses in the Bible that teach us to,

...mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which we learned: and turn away from them (Rom. 16:17).

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians,

We have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command...Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us (II Thess. 3:4,6).

Could he have the same confidence in us?

Such a process is difficult, painful, and should always be seasoned with love. As to when or upon whom it is to be ministered, such is a matter of expediency which, thus, falls the lot of astute elderships. But it must be done! A malignancy ignored is still a malignancy. A malignancy ignored is much more destructive than a malignancy excised and treated properly!

Conclusion

Again, “the weapons of our warfare are...mighty before God to the casting down of...imagination... and

every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:4-5).

We are not “playing guns” in the back yard! We are not simulating war games. We are engaged in the greatest of all conflicts! May we prove ourselves capable, committed, and true. May we engage the enemy with a persistent, balanced attack that will allow us to say with Paul, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith” (II Tim. 4:9)!

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Fifth Annual

TRUTH IN LOVE LECTURESHIP



Theme:
*“Soldiers Of Christ,
Arise”*

Section II:
**Equipped,
Daily Serving**

Chapter 5

Recruiting Soldiers For A Lifetime

Gary Colley



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The Truth In Love Lectureship has been helpful to many souls throughout the years of its existence. The East Hill Church of Christ, with its preacher Paul Sain, the elders, deacons, and members, is to be commended for this great contribution to the faithfulness of the brotherhood. Truth always needs and deserves to be proclaimed, investigated, and received. The gospel preached, heard, and obeyed in life, is the only hope for lost mankind (Rom. 1:16-17)!

Introduction

There have been and are many governments in the world. Each well regulated government has an army to defend its borders as they muster defense against the invading enemy. There is always the threat realized by these governments that there are those who live under the iron rule of "might makes right," who might with strength make an invasion (James 4:1-4). The safety

and peace of the nation is entrusted into the hands of the army; they have been hired to defend and stand against those who would remove the freedom, riches, and blessings enjoyed by the government and people.

In the days of our Lord, Jesus was well acquainted with the Roman Empire, which was in power when He came into the world to establish His kingdom (Dan. 2:44). He knew the strength and dedication of their army. Though escaping death at birth, He finally suffered under the cruelty of the iron hand of Herod’s forces, who finally executed Him, the Son of God, on Calvary’s cross (Matt. 27 and 28).

Paul, the special apostle to the Gentiles, also knew first hand the workings of the Roman army, especially observing their actions, strengths, and weaknesses, from which experiences he wrote many inspired comparisons, such as those in our text. When he appealed to Caesar, he observed the soldiers and sailors who had him under arrest and carried him to Rome as a prisoner (Acts 27:30-31).

The Lord’s Way Of Teaching

The Lord was the Master Teacher. His teaching to His apostles, who were honest, sincere men, made clear their particular work. They were at first limited in their understanding of the spiritual nature of the kingdom of heaven, or church which Christ would build (John 18:36; Acts 1:6). They were called into service and then taught and tutored by the Lord personally, to fight in spiritual combat. They were to uphold and train others to uphold, fight for and defend, that blessed and blood bought institution on earth over which Jesus would reign in heaven as Head (Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:22-

23). Their defense was to be made with the greatest power ever known to man, the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12). The armour revealed and given to them by their King of kings (I Tim. 6:15) was to protect from head to foot, along with even the sword to be used. This defensive and offensive armour is vividly described in Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus (Eph. 6:10-18). The Lord's army is the best equipped army ever known among men!

They Were To Enlist Others

Certain requirements or standards are always required to be met by the enlistee, as are determined and set out by the government he is to be serving. One is not considered a part of any army until the requirements are satisfied, no matter how much honesty, courage, bravery, or ability may be exemplified otherwise! In the United States of America, one must be eighteen years of age, speak the English language, and be sound in body, to enlist in any branch of the armed services. It is clearly understood that all who desire to enter the service must meet the standards or be rejected.

The Lord's army is composed completely of willing volunteers (Matt. 11:28-30; John 5:39-40). No one is forced into His brigade (cf. Rom. 6:16-18)! The Lord promised to give His apostles the "keys of the kingdom" or church of Christ (Matt. 16:16-19). After His resurrection, He taught in the great commission that these apostles were to "go into all the world" preaching the gospel and baptizing those who were believing penitents for the remission of their sins (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38-41). Hence, the keys for entrance into the kingdom, of faith (John 8:24), repentance (Luke 13:3),

confession (Matt. 10:32), and baptism (Mark 16:15-16) are all necessary to enter the Lord’s army. Let us re-emphasize, that no matter how much honesty and sincerity one might possess, he is not “with the Lord” as an enlisted soldier, in the war against the kingdom of Satan, unless he meets the standard or requirements of entering the army. Jesus said,

He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad (Matt. 12:30).

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (I John 2:2-4).

Faithful Service Required

The victory is not won simply by, or upon, entering the army; the war is just beginning. No man is worthy of continuance who retreats or fearfully runs in the face of the enemy (Luke 9:62). No man is allowed to entangle himself in the things of the world to the degree that he cannot serve when called to service (I Tim. 2:3-4). No man is a soldier unto honor in the Lord’s work, who is unwilling to follow the commands of “the Captain of our salvation” (II Tim. 2:19-21; Heb. 2:9-10). If one defects after entering the army and before honorable discharge, he is AWOL or away without leave and will suffer the punishment of his government (cf. II Peter 2:20-22). It has been correctly said that quitters never win and winners never quit! Retirement from the Lord’s army

does not come until death has taken us from the world (Rev. 2:10; 14:13).

The Apostles, Our Examples

The apostles were to teach baptized believers to,
Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever
I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you
always, even unto the end of the world. Amen
(Matt. 28:20).

With the word of reconciliation in hand, these apostles preached everywhere the same message in all of the known world at that time (II Cor. 5:18-20; Col. 1:23).

Hence, the Lord used the term “army” to describe the work of His church as they “contend” or fight for the Captain of their salvation in His warfare against Satan and His army, who seek to destroy souls eternally (John 10:10; Jude 3; I Tim. 6:15; II Tim. 4:6-8). Paul said,

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,
but against principalities, against powers,
against the rulers of the darkness of this world,
against spiritual wickedness in high places
(Eph. 6:12).

By the use of this comparison, our Lord through Paul made known by the armies of the day a clear lesson for His spiritual army, who would be called upon to uphold, defend, and die for, if necessary, the church. They were to maintain and transmit His work of redemption to the future (Luke 19:10; Matt. 28:18-20; I Tim. 4:16).

Soldiers For A Lifetime

All in our time are acquainted with career soldiers. These represent those who make their service a lifetime affair. They have pledged or vowed, under the conditions

laid down by the government served, to stay for the duration required. In spite of times of weariness, difficulties, and hardship, they know that their time allotted is necessary to the needed service. They know that “the hurdles may be high” and “the head winds may be strong.” But they also know because of the backing of their government that their dedication will see them to the end of the task they are called upon to bear!

So it is to be with faithful Christians! All who enroll in the Lord’s army should understand that upon meeting the requirements of primary obedience and upon our confession of faith in Him, we are raised from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4). Our confession of Him makes known our vow that we intend to remain in the narrow way the rest of our days on earth (Matt. 28:20). Since the battle is for a lifetime, according to the heavenly government, so also is the enlistment (Rev. 2:10).

Words Of Encouragement

Since Christian soldiers are liable to become weary in life and in battle, words of admonition are freely given for their strength and should be readily received from the Bible. To Christians Paul wrote,

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (I Cor. 15:58).

Let us remember with thankfulness, that faithfulness and humility in following the commands of our King Jesus will finally bring us “the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 15:57). The many needed

exhortations to Christians not to grow weary, or to faint from the battle, or to forget our hope, fill almost every page of the Bible. This shows the danger Christians must continually face. Many Christians forget to “watch,” and therefore forget how cunning and mighty is their foe (I Peter 5:8). But most of all we grow weak because of forgetting whom we are serving! Therefore there is a great need for the exhortations to:

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity (I Cor. 16:13-14).

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed (Heb. 12:12-13).

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:28-29).

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Gal. 6:9).

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:10-11).

To the listening ear of the tired but ready soldier of Christ, these are indeed “wonderful words of life!” (John 6:63).

A Noble Life

Paul included himself in the danger expressed through the instruction to “let us not grow weary in well doing,” and that with our every opportunity we are to “do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:9-10). In these inspired words we have the divine standard of a noble life! Good deeds never die! They live in our lives and the lives of others to bring back to us unexpected blessings! We have the power through these commands to multiply love and joy both for ourselves and others! Jesus through John on the isle of Patmos assured that this kind of life will endure even after we have passed beyond this veil of tears (Rev. 14:13). Like the life of Abel, who “offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain,” though we pass from this life, we will yet speak through our strong courageous faith and righteous lives (Heb. 11:4). Many children and grandchildren owe their parents and grandparents a great debt of appreciation for teaching and training them in the pure faith of the gospel (II Tim. 1:5). As a result of Timothy’s early teaching, he was able to “war the good warfare” as Paul commanded (I Tim. 1:18). No one, except God, really knows how far-reaching the influences of one faithful soldier has been on generations yet unborn! But the important part is, God knows and will reward!

What Might Possibly Cause Us To Faint?

Many started out to be lifetime soldiers who have now grown weary, just as Paul warned against (Gal. 6:9). Almost any city, town, or community has many

within its limits who once were faithful soldiers, but have left the Lord and His people and are now serving in the devil's forces. What possibly could have happened to turn so many back from their once intended goal of heaven? Could these things happen to us? How must we live to guard ourselves from the fate of those who were once in the faith, but now have turned their backs on the Lord, and have only eternity in hell to look forward to (II Peter 2:20-22; Matt. 25:46)? Help in understanding the causes of some falling from the grace of God are important and should be inspected by every Christian before these difficulties come unexpected, and lest we give over exhausted and disheartened and miss the rewards of heaven (I Cor. 10:12; Heb. 4:1). Let us enumerate some of the causes that are known to cause Christians to faint.

Infirmities Of The Flesh

First and foremost perhaps is the infirmities or feebleness of living in the flesh. When some see the enormous task before the Christian to use his time and ability, not only to live right himself but to also reach the lost, after a while he grows weary. So much to be done; so little time seemingly available, and so much opposition is oftentimes more than one is willing to bear. We have an impulsive temperament and want to do everything at once, and then change to something different. We may plan the work with fervency; but working the plan may, and usually does, call for more energy than we intended to spend! And just here we must remember, though many forget, that we are not in the fight alone, but are partners with the Lord! Paul wrote, "we are labourers together with God" (I Cor. 3:9).

Our responsibility goes no further than our ability and opportunity, and He promises to help us (Gal. 6:5). But for those tasks given to us by God, we ought to say as did Paul, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). And again, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

Disputes And Divisions

Then, we are sorry to say, come the effects of disputes and divisions. It is sad to say, but when the devil gets in among God’s people, some are prone to blame the Lord instead of Satan! Some forget the war is on against Satan! Some forget to fight wrong with the truth! And, some one, and it may be many, is always lost to the cause it seems, when disputes and divisions arise. No wonder that Paul went to such great pains with the Corinthians in saying,

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (I Cor. 1:10).

Paul’s words in this passage (I Cor. 1:10-20) and throughout this letter, are so impassioned for brethren to walk together in the unity and peace for which Christ prayed (cf. John 17:20-21). Faith based on the truth will preserve us as an anchor sure and steadfast. If these means are overlooked we will make “shipwreck” of our faith, and others will perhaps follow us in the wrong (I Tim. 1:19).

Temptation

Never to be forgotten is the great power of external

temptation as it was with Eve and Jesus (Gen. 3; Matt. 4). Even when we are trying to restore others, we are warned about looking to ourselves lest we fall into the same temptation that has led others into sin (Gal. 6:1). Remember, Christ is the great King and Captain of our salvation; but the pathway to the crown was weary, painful, and beset with thorns and blood! See even Him severely tempted (Matt. 4:1-11). But, also see that He overcame all the things with which we may be tempted (Heb. 4:15). We must ever be on guard, deciding before the temptation ever comes how we will react! Paul said,

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (I Cor. 10:12-13).

Let us always remember these words, and be ready to meet temptation head-on, lest we lose our reward!

Ingratitude

The devil uses ingratitude to weary many Christians. Those whom we help do not always properly appreciate us or express any word of “thanks.” Some use us, and when they have received what they want of us, they need our companionship no more! No doubt most have felt the deadening influence of ingratitude. The Lord did. He once saved ten lepers from living death! But recall from the account that only one returned to give thanks (Luke 17:11-19). We are thankful that the Lord did not quit in His mission to seek and save the

lost because of ingratitude! Christians sometime slip into not being thankful, to their own hurt and even through their influence to the destruction of others! But, even this should not stop the faithful Christian soldier from letting his light shine, as he glorifies God by his good works (Matt. 5:16).

Lack Of Success

Legions have been the Christians who have given up the fight because of what seemed to be their lack of success. We rejoice however, that there have been Christian husbands and wives that just would not give up trying to persuade their mates to obey the gospel, knowing what the end would be if they did not (II Thess. 1:7-9). But some quickly forget their mission; and that it is not ours to make people come to Christ, but to invite people to come to Christ (Rev. 22:17). We are to plant the pure seed of the gospel (Luke 8:11), and water it well with the example of our good lives. But also we are to remember always that it is “God giveth the increase” (I Cor. 3:6). Isaiah states the words of Jehovah so aptly,

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isa. 55:10-11).

Paul further assures all the faithful, stalwart, soldiers of the cross, “ye know that your labour is not in vain in

the Lord” (I Cor. 15:58). Our real test of faith in every battle for truth comes in the question, do we believe His promises or not?

Never Faint

As all soldiers know, it is not easy to keep from fainting! The way is “strait” or difficult at times (Matt. 7:13-14). But we also know that the only way to victory is to keep going, even when the way gets rough. A commander of an army does not command one who quits at the first sign of fatigue or difficulty. Neither does God take pleasure in quitters! Only eternity will tell how many souls have been and will be lost (perhaps ours included) because one gave over disheartened and fainted at his post of duty! How many good works might have succeeded, how many spiritual victories might not have failed, if only the soldier in the Lord’s army had not quit before the work was finished! The heroes of faith, recorded in Hebrews 11, such as Noah and Moses, certainly could have found many excuses to quit their labors when they were no doubt fraught with difficulties and jeers. So could Jesus, Peter, and the peerless apostle Paul, have given up many times because the way was heavy with attacks, weariness, rejection, betrayal, thorns, and tears! But their faith in the heavenly Father was far stronger than all of the multiple harsh treatments, prison cells, and even the Roman cross that Jesus was made to bear! But we are eternally grateful that these did not give up and quit before finishing their work!

The Strong Are Needed!

Surely the Christian life is not for weaklings and sissies! But some may say, “You have not suffered what

I have suffered for the cause; you have not walked in my shoes!” This may be true! We may all at times feel that we have been taken for granted, especially after several years of the same task. Perhaps we have, or think we have, been unappreciated, misjudged, mistreated, and misused; or it may be that we have received some harsh and unjust criticism from our fellowman. But, let us ever remember whom we are serving, that He has never failed us, and that it is He who will give the reward (Gal. 1:10; 6:9).

We need to remember and be encouraged often by Paul’s reasoning with the weary Hebrew brethren, as he compares our suffering with the sufferings of Christ, “Ye have not yet resisted to blood, striving against sin” (Heb. 12:4).

How Can We Keep From Fainting?

First of all, we must determine in our heart that we will never resign from being the Lord’s soldier! We must have the mindset that no obstacles will deter, no embarrassment will stop us, and that nothing man can do to us will drive us away from obedience to our Commander!

Next, we must keep ever fresh in our minds the hope of God’s presence and blessings! These promises and blessings are assured “to the end of the world” to the Christian, and further that they will always be there when needed (Matt. 28:20; II Cor. 10:12-13; II Cor. 4:16-18). Jonah said in his prayer, when in the belly of the whale,

When my soul fainted within me I remembered
the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee,
into thine holy temple. They that observe

lying vanities forsake their own mercy (Jonah 2:7-8).

Jonah's words and recognition that our "lying vanities" or vain confidence in going out on our own and not trusting Jehovah, is forsaking our only hope! It is still true (Prov. 3:5-6)!

When David faced grave danger, his faith revived him. He said,

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see
the goodness of the LORD in the land of the
living (Psm. 27:13).

However the way may seem, let us remember that God is not discouraged, nor has He forgotten His servant! This fact caused Paul to say, "for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

Conclusion

Let us pay close attention to Paul's words again,

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in
due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Gal.
6:9).

When in the "due season" the Lord finally smiles His approval on us, "then the toils of the road will seem nothing," and "Heaven will be worth it all!" Just think how great that reunion of old veterans will be "when the saved get to heaven" and "when all of God's singers get home!"

Chapter 6

Basic Training And Preparation For Battle

Bob Berard



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The pervasive instant or “zap-it-and-eat-it” boasts of food advertisements these days say more about our whole way of life in the near twenty-first century than many of us realize and a sizable part of it is not complimentary. We want what we want for our meals, but also at the mall, at the bank, in the barber shop, etc., and we don’t want to wait on it anywhere anytime. We want to get it now, do it now, or go where we want to go without a moment’s delay and we want it all with minimal hassle. It seems that almost everyone wants to make haste in virtually everything, except in that in which the Bible advocates haste—“I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments” (Psm. 119:60).

Though it is profitable to consider a number of injurious side effects to our sumptuous living at break-neck speed, the particular malady introduced here is the grossly mistaken notion that spiritual maturity is easily or rapidly attained. Brethren grievously err in

thinking that the basic training and preparation necessary for spiritual warfare can be accomplished like instant oatmeal or, if not that fast, surely as quickly and simply as a pre-fab house. While it is true that we can make haste in keeping God's commandments and that numerous good works are rapidly and easily done, an instantaneous transition from a babe in Christ to a mature Christian soldier is one task which is the product of time and effort and it must be considerable time and intense effort of the appropriate content. Our study begins with this contrast in mind—the mistaken belief of men about the speed and ease of doing everything and the reality of the arduous task of accomplishing the basic training and preparation necessary in fighting the good fight of faith (I Tim. 6:12).

Being cautioned concerning the foregoing mistaken attitude should not propel us to other extremes such as thinking the task impossible or allowing its formidable challenge to discourage us; these are attitudes which the adversary is happy to offer (I Peter 5:8). Inasmuch as God has never assigned men a task that man was incapable of doing and inasmuch as He has revealed His own flawless faithfulness in doing what needs doing that man cannot do, we can be assured that willing and able souls can obtain the necessary basic training and preparation for the battle and then go on to fight it to a victorious end (Deut. 7:9; Matt. 28:19-20; Rev. 17:14).

Consider in the remainder of this chapter—(1) why the task of basic training and preparation for battle is both necessary and difficult, (2) what is involved in this challenging task, (3) some specific emphasis which should accompany the task, and (4) one particularly effective

method for accomplishment of the challenging task, the preacher training school.

Why Is The Basic Training And Preparation For Battle Both Necessary And Difficult?

The introduction to this chapter paints a society presumptuous of its ability to make everything quick and easy simply because it has discovered ways to make a multitude of other tasks quick and easy. The particular task of basic training and preparation for spiritual battle is greatly underestimated as to its challenge because men underestimate the power of the opposing forces and/or overestimate their own capacity to overcome those forces of evil. Some evidently suppose that the devil is either non-existent or at least fancy him to be in some ways like the popular red-suited, horned, and fork-tailed figure, readily identifiable in his person or easily detected as to his devices. They err and they err fatally (Matt. 7:15). These same dupes or ones with similar eternal hopelessness conclude that living the life of a Christian soldier is a task of only modest difficulty (Luke 13:24).

Since one's final defeat by satanic forces banishes him to a hell of eternal anguish and since one's successful preparation and warfare as a Christian soldier results in his eternal delight and joy in heaven, the following discussion of the difficulty of basic training and preparation for spiritual battle is also a discussion of its necessity. Those failing to see this necessity in their life on earth will in the hereafter invariably look back with endless regret for their failure.

To correct for the two popular but mistaken notions mentioned above, this section is subdivided to study: (1)

the powerful opposition posed by the devil's army, and (2) the nature and scope of the task of basic training and preparation for battle.

The Powerful Opposition. Our adversary, the devil, is strong, devious, relentless, and commands forces outnumbering God's faithful by multiplied millions (Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:9; I Peter 5:8; Matt. 7:13-14). He is the architect of man's first sin and will reign as sin's most impassioned promoter until the end of time (Gen. 3:1ff; Rev. 20:10). He entices men by appealing to their own desires and is able to so disguise his tempting bait with enticing decoration as to deceive the very elect on occasion (James 1:14-15; I John 1:8). The devil should be recognized for the villain he is, a living and active, deception and deadly prince of all evil forces and the inveterate enemy of God and His faithful people.

The devil's servants are men who, willingly, though often ignorantly, do his bidding and thereby undermine the cause of Christ as they speed on to their eternal torment. They, like their master, can be most deceptive, even appearing Paul says, "as the minister of righteousness..." (II Cor. 11:15). These men and women and mature boys and girls are oftentimes our neighbors, family members, and our brethren; consequently most of God's children are literally surrounded by the devil's forces in almost every walking situation (I Cor. 5:10). A host of the devil's servants are heart-hardened, godless people, utterly vicious, and the threat posed by some of these is intensified by their influential positions in government, the media, and our schools. In these strategic spots they are afforded repeated and extensive access to the minds of both young and old. As the adage goes among computer folks the result is G.I.G.O., a

garbage in, garbage out proposition. Adding even more to the opposition’s strength is the presence of the devil’s men in the church of our Lord (Acts 20:30). From among those who are nominally serving the Lord come the most subtle and most destructive threat of all; these are men who are afforded the trust and confidence of fellow soldiers while they work subterfuge among the brethren.

Those who conclude that preparation for battle with the devil is a light and easy matter have not stopped to consider or have not rightly considered the power of the devil and his henchmen as is evidenced by evil’s successes in the world and in the church of our Lord. A world of over five billion people includes accountable souls numbering in the hundred millions; these, in the overwhelming majority of cases, are in the devil’s service. By his deceptive devices he has persuaded this bulk of accountable, hell-bound humanity to accept numerous insupportable conclusions such as: there is no Creator; one cannot know whether God exists or does not exist; there is no authoritative Word of God; the Bible cannot be understood; the Bible authorizes denominational religion; it really doesn’t matter what you believe; God’s love, grace, and mercy are sure to save all men or all who call themselves “Christian”; one is saved by faith only; and once one is saved he cannot be lost. This small sampling of false doctrines shows that the devil’s power over man is facilitated in large measure by his victims who are both disinterested in the most important considerations of life and who are gullible in the “nth” degree. Nevertheless, a sizable number of those following the captain of damnation are not spiritually brain-dead, but intensely interested in spiritual concerns; these men possess tremendous amounts of Bible knowledge and

tenaciously hold to many Bible truths. In this class, consider the writers of some of the denominational commentaries that reflect extensive and sophisticated insight into God's truth and yet they miss the plain, repeated, and emphatic teaching of baptism for remission of sins as well as other fundamental teachings such as the distinctive (un- and anti-denominational) one church which Jesus built (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Matt. 16:18; I Cor. 1:10). Consider our own brotherhood, the Lord's church; the unity in truth desired by the Captain of our salvation is often disrupted and at times those most trusted as faithful and exceptionally intelligent and competent preaching brethren bite and devour others of the same reputation (Eph. 4:2ff; Gal. 5:15). Yes, even the brilliant and avid student of the Bible, even a Solomon, even a David, can be deceived by the enemy who seeks after your soul and mine. His effectiveness shown by observable results reflect both his awesome power of deception and persuasion and his persistent application of that power in opposition to Christ's forces of good. ***Do not underestimate your enemy!***

In spite of the alarm which should be stirred, re-stirred, and kept stirred by contemplating the awesome opposing forces of the devil, one's being well-informed in this business should not be a source of dismay, but a source of caution and thus an informational asset to the Lord's soldiers. Considering the power of those who oppose the Lord it is readily apparent that the Lord's army cannot be weekend warriors, mere reserve forces, or boondoggling "retreaters." There is the need for an always alert, well-trained, maximally-motivated, full-time, around-the-clock force of Christian soldiers (I Cor. 15:58). Being informed about one's enemy should be

regarded as an asset; equipped with this knowledge and the knowledge of God’s provisions for our deliverance from the hottest of battles, we should increase our determination to use that which God has given us and will give us to overpower the most powerful of evil forces (Matt. 10:28; I Cor. 10:13). This we can do as God assures us, “...because greater is He that is in [us]... than he that is in the world” (I John 4:4). Jesus said that He had overcome the world and Jesus through John tells us that we can do likewise (John 16:33; I John 5:4).

The Nature And Scope Of The Task Of Preparation. Regardless of the popular attitude to the contrary, the shaping noble character of a Christian soldier, trained and otherwise prepared for battle, is a task requiring extensive effort. Our strength, discernment, self-control, godliness, courage, boldness, steadfastness, wisdom, and growing love require prayer, study, and experience to develop; all of these are acquired over time, a goodly amount of time, and time accompanied by toil (Heb. 5:12-14; II Peter 1:5ff; Phil. 2:12; Luke 13:24). In this regard, consider the eighty years of training Moses acquired prior to becoming a leader of Israel.

The time and effort required in spiritual growth, service, and preparation for greater service, of course, never excuses the babe in Christ from promptly putting on the Christian armor and reporting for duty in the kingdom (Eph. 6:10ff). At his baptism he enlisted under the Commander who cannot lose and he was not enrolled on a waiting list for later assignment to active duty (Acts 2:47; John 3:5). This new recruit should immediately begin doing what he can do for the war

effort with the knowledge and skill he now possesses and simultaneously continue to prepare himself for greater responsibilities and more difficult assignments in the future. The Lord has many missions of good for the inexperienced Christian and so long as the spiritually immature member abides and acts within the realm of what he knows is right he can accomplish untold good despite his spiritual youth (Rom. 14:23). It is not a shame to be a baby by reason of the recency of one's conversion, but be it understood that those who are babes by reason of negligence need to repent first of that negligence, and then get to work doing and growing (Heb. 5:12-14; James 1:22). All Christians have the obligation to "work for the night is coming," "redeem the time," "desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby," and "hunger and thirst after righteousness..." (John 9:4; Eph. 5:16; I Peter 2:2; Matt. 5:6).

In all the foregoing matters of obeying God from one's spiritual infancy to one's maturity and until one's departure from this world, there is ever to be the realization that one is following Jesus. He is our Savior, our Example, and our victorious Commander in Chief (Rev. 17:14). Jesus has lived where we live and has faced all that we face without a single sin of word, thought, or deed (Heb. 4:15). We are told to strive to do as He has done in His perfect submission to the Father's will (Matt. 4:4). This is our foremost assignment upon the earth (Heb. 12:1ff; Acts 10:34-35; Luke 6:46). In doing this we will be zealous participants in the basic training and preparation for battle as well as persistent soldiers fighting those battles. The fact of endeavoring to follow the sinless perfect Christ should by itself clarify beyond any reasonable misunderstanding that the task we here

study is a challenge demanding our all and demanding our all for all of our life upon earth.

What Is The Basic Training And Preparation For Battle?

Attitudes are “habits of thinking.” Attitudes are conditioned by training and underlie and support our every significant undertaking (Prov. 23:7). With the wrong “habits of thinking” our major efforts are doomed. A fundamental attitude of utmost importance to the Christian soldier is a realistic assessment of the strengths and strategies of the two great spiritual armies which are constantly at war. The preceding section’s explanation of the difficulty and challenge of the task of basic training and preparation for battle is thus an essential part of the training now further explored. For emphasis sake note again that—learning that spiritual warfare is the consummate war which results in every combatant being either an eternal winner or an eternal loser is indispensable to one’s spiritual readiness; learning that Satan’s strong army fights a relentless war to make all men losers is likewise indispensable; learning that Christ’s faithful army of winners is an all volunteer force composed of only those who seek their Commander’s will above all else is indispensable as well. Acquiring and retaining this and much other learning in the form of life-governing attitudes requires regular, conscientious, prayerful Bible study and the zealous application of its fruits (Prov. 2:1ff; James 1:22; II Cor. 13:5; Titus 2:12-14).

Properly done, Bible study is assuredly the key to every heaven-sent help in the arsenal for the Lord’s

army. Using this key as God prescribes avails men of God's Gospel with its power to outfit men in invincible armor and arm them with an unconquerable sword. In Ephesians 6 Paul sets out the familiar metaphor of the Roman soldier's armor and sword to aid in explaining and emphasizing the Christian soldier's Bible-based and Bible built defensive and offensive battle equipment (Eph. 6:10ff). Each piece of life-saving defensive attire and the soul-winning offensive and defensive sword of the Spirit is supplied through Bible truth. Without pursuing a textual study of those excellent verses we turn to an overview of the process of basic training and preparation for battle as taught in the New Testament.

Affording both an excellent overview of the basic training and preparation for battle and a guide for our study are Paul's words,

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus...And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (II Tim. 1:13; 2:2).

If each Christian would obey this passage as is appropriate for his level of spiritual maturity, the preparation for and the actual conduct of the raging spiritual battle would invariably be successful and we would go on to win the victory under the banner of our Lord. Let us consider this invaluable contribution to our study. The passage touches on four points now set out for particular consideration.

Basic Training And Preparation Involves A Message—The Gospel. Paul calls it, "things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses" and again he

referred to it as “the same.” Since the message to be committed is identified as “the things” which Timothy has heard from Paul, and since Paul had just written a few sentences earlier that Timothy was to “hold fast the form (pattern) of sound words which thou hast heard of me (Paul),” and since Paul only taught and endorsed a single authoritative message for man’s spiritual direction, we rightly conclude that “the things” committed to Timothy were the sound words of the soul-saving Gospel which Paul taught everywhere (Rom. 1:15-16; Gal. 1:6-10; I Cor. 16:1). This conclusion is, of course, consistent with the comments above on Ephesians 6. The Bible is the key to the arsenal from which comes the battle gear to equip the Christian soldier for successful warfare.

Great stress should be placed on the point that Paul said Timothy was to commit “*the same*” to other men. This implies that Paul did not want, as he elsewhere made even more plain, anything which in anyway was inconsistent with the message given to Timothy and that he wanted all of the message given Timothy to be passed along to others (Gal. 1:6ff).

Basic Training And Preparation Involves An Activity—Teaching. Timothy is to perform this activity. It is described by the word “commit,” which is taken from a Greek word meaning, “to place to another’s trust, to entrust, to deposit, to commit for sake keeping.”¹ As noted in the preceding subsection, the entrusting or committing involved the gospel. This being a spoken and written message, the committing would involve Timothy’s teaching or communicating that singular gospel and its gospel-endorsed predecessor, the Old Testament, to other faithful men. Since the message to be committed is the Bible, the key activity or task of basic training and

preparation for spiritual warfare involves the transmitting of that all-sufficient and final revelation of God from faithful men to other faithful men. This was the work of Timothy initially but extends beyond him as subsequent paragraphs explain.

Basic Training And Preparation Involves Two Groups Of Men—Faithful Teachers And Faithful Students. Both classes must be faithful. Faithful Timothy was in the first group. Paul had great confidence in Timothy as is evidenced by this and other charges given him (I Tim. 1:3ff). In the second group are the “faithful men” to whom Timothy was to commit the gospel message. The distinction between the two groups is one based on differences in spiritual maturity, knowledge, and skill. Timothy was to be the teacher because he had become the good soldier who could both fight the battle and show others how it should be fought. The other faithful men are those who, with proper training, could become like Timothy.

Basic Training And Preparation Involves A Purpose—The Perpetuation And Propagation Of The Gospel. The purpose Paul has in mind is a perpetual one of propagating the gospel message to all men until the end of time. As Timothy performed the activity Paul ordered, he would commit all of Paul’s message (which message would include the passage now before us) to faithful men. This being done, those faithful men whom Timothy trained would, as Timothy had done, teach other faithful men; those so taught by Timothy’s former students would in their turn teach still others. The process, IF FOLLOWED, perpetuates itself down the stream of time to us and potentially beyond us unto eternity (Matt. 28:20). Paul envisions the perpetuation

and propagation of the gospel by: (1) faithful men teaching the *same* truths of the gospel he had taught and by (2) faithful men receiving those *same* truths that they may be able to teach still others those *same* truths. Both classes are needed, both classes must be able and willing people. The first class should continue to teach faithful men until they can no longer teach and the second group should progress in their studies to supplement their former teacher’s work and then, as necessary, replace the first group. All the while, of course, both groups should be concerned about and acting in behalf of the alien sinner and the unfaithful members as those duties are elsewhere described in the gospel (Matt. 28:19-20; Gal. 6:1ff).

It should be noted that the word “men” in this verse, which denotes those who are to be taught that they might in turn be teachers, is from the Greek word *anthropos*, a generic term for men which covers both men and women. Yes, women can teach and should teach as is consistent with their role (Titus 2:3; Heb. 5:12ff; Acts 18:26). Paul does not prohibit women teachers, nor does he prohibit women from teaching men in I Timothy 2. He does prohibit women from teaching *over men*. Thankfully many women have realized their obligations to use their abilities within their God-assigned role and have immeasurably furthered the cause of our Lord. Among the most notable examples of such contributions would be Lois and Eunice, the grandmother and mother of Timothy (II Tim. 1:5; 3:15).

Those today who lead the Lord’s people by virtue of their authority in an eldership or by their word and deed teaching as evangelists, teachers, and other godly members of the Lord’s church face, as did New

Testament Timothy, the task of teaching other Christians as set out by the peerless apostle. Though it is possible for men to teach themselves from the Bible without the aid of uninspired teachers, such is rarely done and the process is greatly expedited by the provision of faithful teachers teaching faithful men as here prescribed.

Specific Emphasis Necessary In Providing The Basic Training And Preparation For Battle

Undoubtedly the Bible must be accepted as supreme authority for all of our words and deeds (Col. 3:17). This, however, is not to admit that the Bible's mere presence insures salvation or that certain emphasis cannot be noted to bolster the point.

Emphasis Should Be Given To The Fact That Men Should Reason Correctly With The Bible. Among those professing allegiance to the same Bible there is a great gulf of differences in beliefs. These differences frequently result in division and such division is widespread among the Lord's own people even when those people are using identical versions of the Bible. Obvious from these observations is man's tendency to get things wrong even though he has the right Book. Man's getting things wrong is due to his failure to reason correctly or his failure to accept the conclusions of right reasoning. Though the motives contributing to such failures may be the underlying cause of the problem, at times one's motives can be pure and still his reasoning wrong (Prov. 14:12). This points to an urgent need to teach logic as one teaches the Bible. This is not to say that reasoning has priority over the Bible. It is to

recognize that the Bible is a logical book from the preeminent logical mind and can only be truly understood by logically thinking men. Reasoning alone, that is thinking without a Bible, no matter how great the intellect, can never save a single soul, because God has not given man the capacity for discovering His plan of salvation without revelation (Deut. 29:29; Eph. 3:3-4; I Cor. 2:11ff). Likewise, the Bible without reasoning is equally useless because its saving truth must penetrate the human mind through the door of reasoning (I Thess. 5:21).

Reasoning of the correct variety is a Divine mandate. “Come let us reason together, saith the Lord” (Isa. 1:18). “Prove all things, hold fast that which is good” (I Thess. 5:21). These and other passages reflect what men have termed the Law of Rationality which states, “We must accept only those conclusions which are warranted by the evidence.” Inasmuch as God has made us rational beings, has given us a Book which is directed to our intellects, and in that very Book tells us to use those intellects diligently and carefully, it is utter foolishness to suppose that saving truth will be acquired by osmosis and through some “better felt than told experience.”

Though it is true that we have rationality as accountable humans it is still the case that we often abandon it. While we may discover our mistakes without having studied the formal principals of logic, the use of the thinking tools which logic provides can facilitate the examination of our conclusions and those of others that we may better “try the spirits, whether they be of God” and “search the Scriptures whether those things are so” (I John 4:1; Acts 17:11).

Emphasis Should Be Given To The Fact That Men Should Recognize The Bible As God's Saving Power. Paul affirmed by inspiration that the gospel is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). The soul being man's most precious and only enduring existence, gives the soul's salvation priority towering over whatever stands in second place in one's life. The Bible is a book about man's salvation from Genesis to Revelation. Though its principles are often of help in matters secular, social, and political, its avowed goal is to save man's immortal soul (Luke 19:10; John 3:16; 16:13; II Peter 1:3; 3:9; Phil. 2:16). If in teaching the Bible this matter is not stressed, the Bible is robbed of its potency and teacher and student deprive themselves of the best God has to offer. Surely, if the Bible's recurring information about and emphasis upon man's salvation is consistently and faithfully taught to faithful men, a zeal for God, a zeal for His truth, and a zeal for the souls for men will be forthcoming (Gal. 6:7-8). The blessings in this life and the next which we obtain with this great salvation, the utter hopelessness assured without it, and the glorious Trinity that makes all good things possible, are truths combining to set the hearts of God's men on fire and to compel them to steadfastly fight for what is right and to unflinchingly oppose and expose that which is wrong (Rom. 12:9; Eph. 5:11; Jer. 20:9). "What God has emphasized, let not man minimize!"

Emphasis Should Be Given To The Fact That Men Should Recognize That All Of The Bible Is To Be Preached. Some of the most potent fuel for the current digression is that produced by what is not being poured out to the brethren from the pulpits of the Lord's churches. That is to say that oftentimes the things that

are not preached that need to be preached results in a spiritual diet of baby food which not surprisingly perpetuates babyhood among the brethren. Paul’s prophecy of II Timothy 4 concerning departing from truth and turning to fables is indeed fulfilled as described by the poetic words of an all too typical congregation.

Preach us a sermon preacher
One we’ll all love to hear;
While we pat you on your spineless back
And you scratch our itching ears.²

To correct those in the pulpit and in the pew from following this popular path of avoiding everything controversial there is need for God’s people to stress ALL the gospel. Those faithful men being taught “the same” message Timothy was taught by Paul ought often to be reminded of the charge, “Preach the word” (II Tim. 4:2). Those unable to see that that means all, every bit, all without any part lacking, can turn to Matthew 4:4 where they will hear the Lord say it even more plainly. The purity from blame for other men’s sins was appropriated by Paul by his preaching all the counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27). Preachers today who leave out what Paul put in are put out of Paul’s class, the class of faithful servants of Christ; such preachers are not pure from the sins of the one they leave in his sin by their silence and they cannot truthfully claim to love Him (I Cor. 11:1). Preachers today who teach no false doctrine, but nevertheless encourage men to loose where God has bound by their failure to preach what they know needs preaching are as condemned for liberalism as are the vocal teachers of such sinful loosing. If not, why not?

The militant soldier of the cross knows that “sin when it is full-grown bringeth forth death” (James 1:14).

He knows that that death is eternal, irreversible, and awful and therefore he opposes all sin and he does so with all conviction and without any apology for the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). He recognizes that he dare not minimize what God has emphasized and that means he will be no coddler of anybody's sin simply because they have such wonderful other virtues.

Emphasis Should Be Given To The Fact That Men Should Recognize That The Bible Only Is To Be Our Authority. As the digression becomes more clear to more brethren, it becomes more likely that a strong backlash is in the making. Without any claim of being assured that such is so, it does seem from observation of the past that extremes are answered by extremes and that drastic shifts in one direction are countered by drastic shifts in the opposite direction. As liberalism continues to gather steam there may well be an overreaction going beyond the truth and into anti-ism. Our Bible classes, sermons, articles, and especially our preacher training schools should be urgently teaching concerning the need to abide above both liberalism and anti-ism, to show the error in going either to the left or right of truth. We must expose efforts to make optional what God has made obligatory, but with equal conviction expose efforts to make obligatory what God has made optional. One of the most attractive lures in the devil's tackle box for those big fish somewhat mindful of the need for Bible authority is the bait which appears only to offer safety but which actually imposes man-made laws. Man-made laws which bind without biblical authority to bind are of the devil and not of God. Anti-ism is sin (Gal. 2:4).

In our encouragement of militancy in the Lord's

army, it should be made clear that the positions one takes and boldly defends as a Christian warrior are always to be the Lord’s positions. Zeal and fervor in our preaching and teaching do far more harm than good when we take the wrong side of an issue (Rom. 10:2).

An Effective Way To Provide The Basic Training And Preparation For Battle

The faithful preacher training schools operated by local congregations of God’s people afford an excellent means of providing the basic training and preparation for battle needed in the Lord’s militant church.

There Is A Need For Intensive Bible Training.

As shown in the above sections the need for faithful teachers and the need for faithful students who would become teachers is an urgent one. Schools like the Memphis School of Preaching in Tennessee and the Houston College of the Bible in Texas are set for the defense of the gospel and are staffed with the men able to do the teaching necessary with the emphasis necessary in the time necessary to maximize the number of good men put into the field as gospel preachers.

Such Schools Are Authorized And Practical.

Since they are simply the local church at work in fulfillment of II Timothy 2:2 and the great commission, Bible schools or preacher training schools are undoubtedly authorized (Matt. 28:19-20). Such schools are doing what other congregations Sunday and Wednesday Bible classes are doing, but provide more time for more indepth study since they have more teachers available. These teachers ideally are themselves

experienced gospel preachers. One gospel preacher with typical duties of local work would be hard-pressed to teach even one student in a verse by verse study of the entire Bible plus numerous related courses such as “The Preacher And His Work,” “Bible Geography” and “New Testament Greek,” in just two years, but a congregation which has several such preachers to call on as either part-time or full-time faculty can accomplish this feat with many students. Classes all day long on week days, and even night classes, and Saturday classes are possible when several men are available to teach. Such schools provide the means for men seeking training as gospel preachers to obtain their training in an intensive manner so as to begin the work they want to do as soon as possible.

Such Schools Need Help. Since these special Bible training or preacher training schools depend upon the availability of several gospel preachers and since it is rare nowadays to find several faithful congregations in a small geographic area, it becomes necessary for a church to support several men full-time. This, of course, requires more funds than many churches have and so they often ask for individuals and other congregations to help in their good work. Inasmuch as the work being done benefits the cause we all love and promote and inasmuch as such schools usually are able to provide faculty members and students to assist with regular or fill-in preaching or other work for churches in their area, the help may often become a matter of each lending a hand to others and receiving a helping hand from others (Gal. 6:10).

A Caution Is Needed. Though there are a number of faithful schools conducting the kind of training

discussed here, there are others which are doing more harm than good in compromising the truth and thereby promoting a perverted message. All prospective students and their supporters should “try the spirits” as John says that they may know whether or not the men teaching in such schools are those determined to walk in the old paths (I John 4:1; Jer. 6:16). Schools which are determined to do right will not object to questions about their teaching or operation.

Conclusion

Without basic training and other preparation for the ongoing war for spiritual life and death, no Christian soldier can stand against the fiery darts of the evil one and the whole of humanity will go down in eternal defeat (Eph. 6:10ff). Despite this sobering truth many, if not most, of our brethren indicate by their paltry efforts at Bible study and teaching that they do not even realize that there is a spiritual war, much less that they are in it and are being badly defeated. In view of this rampant apathy in the brotherhood and in view of the steady march into death and torment being made by the millions who have never heard the gospel, it is imperative that those aware of the great need take heed, act, and act promptly.

Each of God’s children should be reminded of the threat posed by the forces of darkness and be encouraged to take personally the charge to fight against fatal error as a faithful and competent soldier regardless of the cost (II Tim. 2:3-4). Furthermore, all of us should encourage, exhort, and aid as we are able all others willing to enlist in the Lord’s army or to develop themselves as more effective soldiers in His service. If

we continue faithfully serving in the Lord's army, we cannot lose (Rev. 17:14). May God help us to remain faithful to our Commander and help us to help others fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life (I Tim. 6:12).

Endnotes

1 Fritz Rienecker, **A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament**, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), p. 640.

2 Author unknown.

Chapter 7

True Leaders In The Lord's Army

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.



Robert and Irene are a wonderful team; faithful servants in the Lord's army ~ Robert graduated from Freed-Hardeman, David Lipscomb, and George Peabody Colleges ~ He has written many books, tracts, and articles in brotherhood publications ~ He has served as the local evangelist with the Ripley, TN church for over twenty years ~ Robert and Irene have three children.

It is a joy unspeakable to be able to participate again on this great lectureship. Though one of our newer lectureships, it has already taken its place as one of the finest. I commend the elders here, brother Paul Sain and the entire East Hill congregation for hosting this annual lectureship each spring. It is doing tremendously great good.

Leadership is crucial in the well-oiled functioning of any concern whether it be a home, school, factory, business, profession or the Lord's church which He established more than nineteen centuries ago and which still exists on earth today. Yet, there is not an oversupply of true leadership in any of the foregoing concerns. This is surely true in many local congregations which wear the name of Christ and which should be doing a far greater work for Him than they are. This lesson will zero in on elders as ***"True Leaders In The Lord's Army."***

Be it stated with ascending emphasis at the outset of our lesson that true elders know the Lord's church is far more than a family; it is the army of the living God. Its lyrical slogans must be "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Soldiers of Christ, Arise." Paul was a soldier of Christ (II Tim. 4:7). He sought young men as helpers and trained them to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ (cf. II Tim. 2:3). His first epistle was I Thessalonians. He alluded to the military in I Thessalonians 5:8. He alluded to the military in his final epistle (II Tim. 2:3-4; 4:7). He sought to equip soldiers of Christ for the warfare they faced (Eph. 6:10-18). He viewed Christ as Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10). Flee the wrong, follow the wise and fight the good fight of faith were his military fundamentals in I Timothy 6:11-12.

An Overview Of Elders In The New Testament

Saul and Barnabas took Antiochian aid to elders in Acts 11:29-30. This is their initial mention in Holy Writ. Paul and Barnabas ordained or appointed elders in every church in retracing their first missionary trip in Acts 14:23. Elders at Jerusalem played a decisive role in the Jerusalem Conference proceedings as per Acts 15. Paul met with Ephesian elders at Miletus in Acts 20:17-38. The last half of Acts 20 ought to be **MUST** reading for every elder at least monthly and preferably weekly. Elders in Acts 21:18 constituted a part of the welcoming committee in receiving Paul at the end of Missionary Journey Three. By implication Romans 12:8 spoke of an elder or one "that ruleth." Paul alluded to them as pastors in Ephesians 4:11. Paul knew the difference between pastors and evangelists. This simple

or elementary distinction eludes modern preachers en masse! Bishops and deacons are both mentioned in Philippians 1:1. Again, by Pauline implication, they are portrayed in I Thessalonians 5:12-13 as the ones “over you in the Lord.” In I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 we have the Timothy and Titus tables of qualifications respectively submitted. Proper honor accorded them is touched on in I Timothy 5 as well as how to handle elders who get out of spiritual control. Our duty to them and their responsibility to us constitute dual obligations in Hebrews 13:17. Quite likely, Hebrews 13:17 is inclusive of both elders and apostles as the Hebrew people had been under the oversight of both as noted in the book of Acts. Miraculously endowed elders occupy the limelight in James 5:14-15. Peter has choice gems of wisdom relative to elders, of which he was one himself, in I Peter 5:1-4.

References to elders in the gospel records allude to Jewish leaders in Judaism—not leaders in the Lord’s church. Allusions to elders in John’s Revelation are to creatures in heavenly habitations—not overseers in the Lord’s church here on earth (Rev. 4:5-7).

This brief overview lends emphasis to this vastly important role filled by men of spiritual nobility.

Attaining And Maintaining Eldership Qualifications

Paul and Peter respectively set them forth in I Timothy 3, Titus 1, and I Peter 5. These sound and solid qualifications fill both positive and negative categories. There are about twice as many positives as negatives. Yet Paul and Peter were not all-negative

penmen as touching eldership qualifications nor were they all-positive scribes in this vital regard. There is beautiful balance which the Lord desired and that we must accept with becoming reverence today.

Qualifications touch a man in character (what God knows him to be) and reputation (what his peers deem him to be). Domestic relationships are made imperative. Bachelor bishops would be a contradiction of terms though one of the main change agents in Nashville does not agree with Paul along this line. They are to be family men with one wife and one or more children who are Christians. Younger children who may not yet be old enough to be Christians are not to be rebellious or rioters. They are to be apt or competent in teaching. They are to be men with leadership capability. These qualifications call for men of seasoned experience, wisdom, unbending love for truth and uncompromising allegiance to it. They are to be men who possess a holy hatred for error—ALL error. Falsehood tolerance is NEVER becoming of an elder.

These qualifications NEVER need revision or an up-date—just an ardent attainment of them and then marvelous maintenance of them.

Leaders As Sentinels On Spiritual Israel's Walls

Designations given them richly suggest such solid stations assumed and maintained. They are elders or presbyters—men of seasoned wisdom who know danger when they sense its lethal approach. They are bishops or overseers—men charged to see that things which ought to be done are done rightly or in holy harmony with Jehovah's expressed will in Holy Writ. They are

pastors/shepherds who guard the flock from danger and feed it with doctrine that is sound or spiritually healthy. These very concepts were eloquently embedded in Paul’s mind as he counseled Ephesian elders with words of weight and wisdom,

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:28-32).

Vigilance or watchfulness is still on the Pauline front burner in Hebrews 13:17. Herein elders or bishops are men who “watch for your souls...”

Ezekiel, Jehovah’s prophet for exiled Judah, had strong words for careless, insensitive shepherds in his era as reflected in chapters 3, 33, 34 of his great prophetic document. Sleeping sentinels and ever alert shepherds do not come wrapped up in the same human packages.

Leaders Who Are Abreast Of The Times

Elders should not be the last to know when sin

and falsehood are in the camp or are headed for the camp of local Christians. Elders and apostles in Acts 15 were abreast of the lethal dangers posed by adamant Judaizers. The wool was not pulled over their eyes by sly and smooth speakers of flagrant falsehood. These entrenched champions of mighty truth did not yield as much as an inch of contested ground. Paul expressed it fully and fervently,

And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you (Gal. 2:4-5).

We shudder to think what might have been the sequel of Christianity if they had yielded ground. The new religion could well have become simply an annex to Judaism and not a religion in its own right at all!

Various waves or error that sweep relentlessly against Zion's ship should not catch elders in the deadly clutches of ignorance. Early in this century premillennialism caught many elderships minus knowledgeable awareness, ability to refute it and courage to meet it head-on. Anti-ism did the same around the middle of this current century. So did the charismatic movement, liberalism, Crossroads, the new hermeneutics, efforts to compromise with the Christian church, the epidemic surge toward ever expanding roles for women, suspending any and all opposition and exposure toward mechanical music in worship and the cunning change agents now at their infamous stations—errors which have faced us from the late 1960's to the present. Men

forever behind the times are not going to be the kind of elders these crucial and critical times need.

Leaders Who Will Stand In The Gap

The derived imagery is from Ezekiel’s era during Judah’s exile in Chaldean country. Jehovah’s word states,

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none (Ezek. 22:30).

The search was as futile as Jeremiah’s seeking a real man in Jerusalem in Jeremiah 5:1 or Diogenes of Athens with lighted lantern in mid-day seeking for a man, a real man, an honest man, in the Grecian metropolis. Men who stand in the gap must be lion-hearted. They must not fear to buck what is pleasing and popular. They must be willing to stand up and be counted. They must be willing to stand, even as Stonewall Jackson did in a crucial Civil War battle with bullets coming at him from all directions, and even die rather than give up truth to an avowed enemy of Calvary (cf. Phil. 3:18-19). Jackson did for his beloved Confederacy; true leaders for Christ must do it for a Cause far greater than that championed by the South during the 1860’s—the Cause of Christianity.

Leaders Who Can Recognize And Refute Error

In the Titus table of eldership qualifications Paul wrote with courage and conviction,

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine

both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Titus 1:9-11).

Sound and solid preachers who are set for the defense of the gospel, as was Paul in Philippians 1:17, need an army of fearless elders joining forces with them in exposing any and all extant errors in our day. A close and dear friend of mine recalled recently the congregation in which he grew up wherein both his Dad and Grandad served in the eldership. He said, "If any error was taught there, my Dad or Big Daddy went to the pulpit and refuted it promptly." Oh, for more elders of this caliber today! They would be worth their weight in the purest of gold.

Leaders Who Are Accessible

Elders who hold themselves aloof from the congregation they oversee will always be misfits in the work of shepherding souls. Quite to the contrary, they would be men who are approachable. Evangelists who serve under them should find them of this disposition. Deacons, Bible teachers, young people and every member should find them accessible or men to whom they can go for counsel, information and spiritual aid in times of peril and need. When there is sickness or death, elders must be men who exhibit the sympathy of a true shepherd. When tough decisions have to be made, a member should be able to approach an eldership for insights and experienced guidance. This is why novices

or newborn Christians must be passed over when eldership selections are underway (I Tim. 3:6).

Paul used the analogy of a man’s care for his own family in delineating eldership aptness both in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Dysfunctional husbands and fathers are not noted as family heads to whom wives and children feel free to go with their personal problems. Successful husbands and fathers can be approached by every family member with the strongest assurance that they will be heard and helped if at all possible. Surely, elders must be of this counseling potential.

Elders shepherd souls. There must be spiritual contact between leaders and those led or shepherded. Elders labor among the flock; they admonish the flock as per I Thessalonians 5:12-13. Such laboring and admonishing endeavors will be greatly nullified unless there is a bond of real accessibility between overseers and the overseen.

Elders watch for souls (Heb. 13:17). Such entails an easy access between those who watch and those who are spiritually watched or cared for in the living of the Christian life.

Leaders Who Are People Oriented

Titus 1:8 majors in this imperative. Elders are lovers of hospitality. They are generous to guests. They go out of their way to make people feel at ease, to feel welcome and wanted. Elders enhance themselves when they are early to service and among the last to leave spending these invaluable moments in greeting people and letting all, members and visitors alike, know that they love to be around people.

Elders are lovers of good men as per the KJV or

lovers of good as per the ASV of 1901. Members who love good and do good have steadfast friends in people oriented elders.

Elders are men of sobriety, justice, holiness and temperance or self-control. Elders do right toward themselves, others and God. This is threefold living—inward, outward, and upward. The first and third contribute much toward the second. A man who is right with self and pure in the sight of his Holy Maker on Heavenly High is one who will seek to be at peace and do right by other people.

Elders are to be ensamples or examples to the flock they lead. Loving people makes it easier to be an ensample or example in conversation and conduct.

Leaders Who Both Do And Say

Ezra was a great leader of Jehovah's people subsequent to the Chaldean captivity from 605 B.C. to 536 B.C. Perhaps the most familiar verse in the ten chapter book that bears his appellation reads,

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments (Ezra 7:10).

Here we have preparation, practice and proclamation in the one-two-three order of priority. Ezra was a doer and then a teacher.

Lovable Luke began his second treatise of truth with these words of weight, wonder, and wisdom,

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach (Acts 1:11).

Jesus did and then taught. What precious priority is thus portrayed. The Pharisees of Christ’s era were notorious for saying and not doing (Matt. 23:3). Like many today they were BIG in the talk department and LITTLE in the performance department. Paul counseled both Corinthians and Philippians to follow him. He was a doer and then a teacher or proclaimer.

Elders must be men who are doers and then teachers of others. Congregations who have such men in the eldership are fortunate indeed.

“Come on, boys, follow me” were wonderful words a man remembered and conveyed to me the day I helped preach his Dad’s funeral. His Dad was always ahead as a leader whether they were going to the field to work or to church to worship and serve God EVERY time the doors were open. That man served as an effective leader in at least two congregations in Middle Tennessee. This is how his fellow Christians remembered him also—one always in the lead as doer and teacher.

Leaders Who Know And Dispense Sound Doctrine

Leaders or elders in God’s church should be ardent adherents of sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is healthy or wholesome teaching. Titus was to speak “the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). “Sound speech” was to characterize all that Titus stated in the communicative department as per Titus 2:8. Elders need to be guided by such counsel just as much as do gospel preachers. Specifically, elders are charged to be adept or proficient in the usage of sound doctrine to the degree that they may,

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Titus 1:9-11).

Elders are charged by Paul in Acts 20:28 and by Peter in I Peter 5:2 to feed or tend the flock of God which is among them. Respectively, these twin declarations read,

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood...Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.

Elders should make doubly sure that pulpits under their oversight radiate the old Jerusalem gospel, and it only, minus fear or favor. Pulpits of churches of Christ in recent years have reverberated with all kinds of strange sounds and devilish doctrines. Such is a shame and disgrace before God, Christ and the Spirit of truth. In many congregations there is a famine of the Word of God in pulpits. Brother Gus Nichols used to say, "The Lord has a mighty hard time getting His say into modern day preaching!" "My brethren, these things ought not so to be" is of wider application than conspicuous inconsistencies in the language department (James 2:10). Bible classes should be watched with the same diligent

care. A teacher that harbors theistic evolution can do irreparable damage to a group of impressionable youth before elders might ascertain what is materializing in that uncontrolled class. Many just so errors as the aforementioned one have crept into congregational thinking and practice by a cunning teacher who sowed such seeds in a class setting. Though deeply controversial, elders DO have a right to impose a version policy and they should not be slow in stating it and enforcing it. The devil has no more effective tool in his arsenal of weaponry than perverted Bibles freely used in pulpits and Bible classes.

Churches will remain solid and sound only as they are taught sound doctrine and practice it with adamant zeal. There are NO other ways of assuring such.

Leaders Who Can Challenge A Local Congregation

Humanity is so constituted that it does better when a challenge is before it. Teachers recognize this as they work with impressionable and developing minds. Parents recognize this as they rear children from infancy to responsible adulthood. Coaches rely on this in conditioning their athletes to perform well on the playing floor or field. Employers practice this in selling the merits to workers to perform with proficiency.

Prudent elders know this and ever seek to capitalize on it. Budgets are met and even exceeded by erecting congregational challenges and keeping them before the flock throughout the year. Attendance is kept up by setting challenging goals before the members. Soul winning is deepened in the minds of members by keeping the evangelistic charges of Matthew 28:19 and Mark

16:15 on the front burner of congregational and individualistic priority. Local, state, nation and world evangelism should be the very heartbeat of the challenges an eldership keeps before the membership they oversee. Pulpit proficiency and Bible class efficiency flow from challenges constantly placed before sowers of the seed which is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). The challenge to be more consecrated to Christ each day we live is a great gift a competent eldership beautifully bequeaths each sheep in the flock it oversees.

Elders should be men of vision. Solomon, wisest of the ages, said some three thousand years ago, "Where there is no vision, the people perish..." (Prov. 29:18). Congregations languish and perish because vision is conspicuously absent. Many congregations never reach their potential because they live far below what they could be doing for the Lord and His Holy Cause. Challenge is an intense imperative in building great congregations for Christ.

Leaders Who Know They Are Under-Shepherds And Over-Shepherds

This segment title is not contradictory. They are under-shepherds relative to Christ. He is the great Shepherd of the sheep inclusive of both leaders and those led (Heb. 13:20). He is the "Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" as per I Peter 2:25. He is over the shepherds or bishops of each of His congregations. Peter captures the thought with pungency by writing.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (I Peter 5:4).

Chief would imply those under him; He is OVER them.

Elders are over-shepherds relative to the flock. Peter counseled first century elders to “Feed (tend—ASV) the flock of god which is among you, taking the oversight thereof...” (I Peter 5:2). To Thessalonian saints Paul referred to those “over you in the Lord...” (I Thess. 5:12). Hebrews 13:17 enjoins submission and obedience to elders. This implies they are over us and we are under them.

Those who deny any authority inheres in the eldership must do a gigantic passover on all the passages quoted in this segment of our contemplation.

Leaders Who Hate And Expose Error

There is no way that we can placate the devil and his devotees and still be loyal to Christ who is “the faithful and true witness” and the Holy Spirit who is the “Spirit of truth” (Rev. 3:14; John 16:13). He who is “Faithful and True” judges and makes war in righteousness (Rev. 19:11). He loves righteousness and hates iniquity as per prophetic prediction and New Testament fulfillment (Psm. 45:6; Heb. 1:7-8). Elders in the church He owns, heads and directs cannot treat error lightly and be pleasing to Him. The **Mem** section of Psalm 119 begins with “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (v. 97). This stately section ends with these words of weight, wonder, and wisdom. “Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way” (v. 104). The **Ain** section of Psalm 119 ends with, “Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way” (v. 128).

Elders establish the tone and tenor of

congregational attitudes and actions toward error. Who else can do it better than they? I realize the pulpit is powerful in this area but remember pulpit personnel is determined by eldership selection. Paul's words to the Ephesians is still in our beloved Bible. It reads,

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them (Eph. 5:11).

Matthew 7:15 is still in the Bible. It reads,

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

God has not removed I John 4:1 from our Bibles. It reads,

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

This same apostle's dynamic directive to the elect lady and her children is still in our Bible and reads,

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (II John 9-11).

This spiritual "son of thunder" (Mark 3:17) needs to be heard and heard clearly by every eldership in the brotherhood today. Furthermore, his wise counsel needs to be heeded. We are in a war with Satan and sin and white flags of surrender should never be waved by any of our elderships or the congregations they oversee.

Opposition and exposure must be our constant attitude and permanent action toward error—ALL error.

Leaders Who Know The True Nature Of The Church And Will Keep It That Way

The church is not an entertainment facility; it is not a recreational agency. It is not a glorified country club. It is not a sounding board for political partisans when nearby elections are at hand. The church is not in the money-hoarding business with vast amounts filling banking coffers.

The church is a spiritual institution. “My kingdom is not of this world” were the plain, pungent words Christ hurled at spineless Pilate in his roman Court just prior to Calvary (John 18:36).

The heavenly supplied mission for the church is threefold—evangelism, edification, and benevolence. When it is deeply engrossed in such, it will not have time or finances in doing and being ALL things its members have envisioned for it and constantly pressure for such.

They know who heads the church—the Lord and not Change Agents in Nashville or Abilene. They know what the terms of entrance are and NO substitution will be tolerated. They know its names or designations and man-made descriptions will be highly unwelcome. They know what true worship is as based on John 4:23-24 and NO “Holy Wow” is going to be permitted. They know that God set elders over His local congregations—not college professors who seldom ever move from their ivory towers yet want to call congregational shots. They

know what is required in Christian living and man-made deviations will be vetoed promptly and permanently. They know whom to fellowship and whom not to fellowship and are not going to be swayed by “gospel and doctrine” or “Big F and Little f” rhetoric minus Scripture and logic. They know what the Bible doctrine of final things is and are not going to capitulate to millennial rumblings and rantings. They know what the role of women is and are not going to cave in to those crying for expanding roles for women. They know God demands congregational singing and innovations such as mechanical music and “special music” (choirs, solos, etc.) are not going to supersede that which is Scripturally enjoined upon us. Change Agents will not get a foot inside the door of congregations overseen by true elders in the Lord’s militant cause.

Leaders With Heaven On Their Mind

God’s elders of true nobility and deepening spirituality are determined to be on the Judge’s right hand in that eventful day of final reckoning. They want all their flock to be situated in the same delightful position. They yearn for that “crown of glory that fadeth not away” (I Peter 5:4). They desire to give a joyful account—not one filled with grief—for all souls that have been committed to their care and keeping (Heb. 13:17).

Conclusion

God’s true leaders in His army lead the **church militant** today; they anxiously await that golden tomorrow when they and the congregations they have led are part and parcel of the ***church triumphant!***

Chapter 8

The Guidebook Of Every Soldier

David Sain



David has faithfully preached the gospel for over forty years ~ Presently he preaches for the Wood Avenue Church in Florence, Alabama (since 1977) ~ He has significant experience in radio and television work (since 1967) ~ He has written numerous tracts, books, and has taught thousands via video tape (produced by the Way of Life Studio) ~ David and Phyllis have two children and four grandchildren.

The culture of the nineties is vastly different from the culture of other eras. We are a part of a highly-educated, technologically-oriented society, in which many people pride themselves on being free-thinkers.

They contend that we should not be enslaved to the traditions and thinking of former generations. Instead, they say, we must be willing to change and do things differently. And they underscore such an appeal with the reminder, “After all, we are living in a different culture. Times have changed and we must change with the times.”

The appeal for “change” has had a profound impact upon our world. And, it is having a dramatic effect upon the church. As examples: (1) Preaching about divorce has changed, with more and more preachers taking a position that accommodates people in their adulterous relationships. (2) Many brethren have “softened” their views about the use of mechanical music in worship,

saying that, while they personally think it is wrong, they will not condemn those who engage in such. (3) The cry is heard today that our preachers of the 50's were mean-spirited in their preaching, and that we must be more loving toward our religious neighbors. We are told to lay aside our doctrinal differences and seek unity with our religious friends upon the basis of our common faith in the Lordship of Jesus. (4) A "hot" issue in many churches is the role of women, with some once-conservative brethren contending that women can be given roles of leadership in the church, including the opportunity to lead singing, serve the Lord's Supper, make announcements, and lead prayer when the church is assembled. Some even believe that women can be appointed to the eldership.

What, you may be wondering, does all of this have to do with my topic ***The Guidebook of the Soldier?*** Well, it has much to do with the topic, as the following will illustrate.

The Change In Attitude Toward The Bible

One of the most alarming and significant changes in recent years is the attitude of the average person toward the Bible. We hear people say, "The Bible is out of date." They contend that the Bible is irrelevant to man in the nineties because it reflects another culture. We are told, for example, that the things which Paul wrote regarding women may not be binding upon us because the things which Paul wrote reflected the culture of that day and may not apply to us in a different culture.

This "change" in attitude toward the Holy Scriptures has given birth to what we have come to

know as the new hermeneutics, i.e., a new and different method of interpreting and applying the Scriptures.

Many no longer consider the Bible to be a pattern for us to follow. The shameful attitude that seems to be more and more common is expressed in various ways: “We need to look at the Scriptures in more realistic ways.” “Is what Paul wrote to be taken as God’s will for all times and cultures?” “Scriptures must be understood in the context of their communities and are not to be taken literally in other contexts.” “While the Spirit may have led Paul to write one thing, the Spirit may be leading you to something different.”

During the past few years, I have taken advantage of every opportunity that I have had to talk to gospel preachers who have many years of experience, and who travel extensively to preach throughout our brotherhood. Based upon their observations and comments, there is little question that two of the most significant and consequential changes in the church over the past forty to fifty years is the decline in our knowledge of the Bible, and the decline of respect for the Bible as our final and all-sufficient authority in spiritual matters. When I began to preach, the prevailing attitude among those to whom I preached was, “If that is what the Bible says, that settles it.” Now a common attitude is, “Well, I know the Bible says that, but...” (followed by a self-serving, subjective explanation).

With all of the foregoing in mind, coupled with an awareness of the worldly conditions that confront the Christian today, let us turn our attention to a study of the guidebook of the soldier of Christ.

It is my purpose in the remainder of this study to discuss five things:

- (1) The Bible is God's Word,
- (2) The Bible is truth,
- (3) The Bible is all-sufficient,
- (4) The Bible is the final source of religious authority, and
- (5) The Soldier's knowledge of his guidebook.

The Bible Is God's Word

The Bible is the divinely-inspired Word of God. In II Peter 1:20-21, the apostle Peter wrote about the Scriptures revealed through the prophets. He wrote,

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

This affirms that the prophets spoke by divine inspiration. They did not speak by their wisdom, but as "moved" by the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul declared the same thing to have been true of the things spoken by himself and the other apostles. He wrote to the Corinthian Christians regarding the origin of that which he taught.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (I Cor. 2:12-13)

So, Paul and the other apostles did not speak on their own, i.e., by their own wisdom. They spoke by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And that was a fulfillment

of the promise that Jesus gave before He left this earth.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come (John 16:13).

Further, in I Corinthians 2:12-13, note that Paul said that the “words” which they spoke were words which the Holy Spirit taught them. So, the Holy Spirit did more than give the apostles an idea or a concept which they developed on their own. Instead, the inspiration by which they spoke and wrote was a “word-for-word” inspiration.

Furthermore, when Paul gave a compliment to the Christians at Thessalonica regarding their attitude as they received what Paul spoke to them, he also confirmed his words to be divinely inspired.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (I Thess. 2:13).

When Paul spoke as an apostle to the Thessalonians, they did not hear “the word of *men*, but as it is in truth, the word of *God*.” And he commended them for understanding that fact and for receiving it as such.

A well-known Scripture that affirms the inspiration of the scriptures is what Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith. He first warned Timothy that more and more deception would take place as evil men “wax worse and worse” (II Tim. 3:13). Then he told Timothy to

continue steadfast in the scriptures which he had known from childhood, because they are able to make one wise unto salvation (II Tim. 3:14-15). He continued his confirmation of the power of the scriptures with the declaration, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (II Tim. 3:16).

Therefore, we believe in the plenary, verbal and divine inspiration of the Bible.

The Bible Is Truth

To say that the Bible is God's Word is to say that it is truth, for God's word is truth. Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Knowing that the Word of God is truth, we know that we can trust God. Remember, the Hebrew writer affirmed it is, "...impossible for God to lie..." (Heb. 6:18). So, since we know that we can trust God, we know that we can trust the Bible, which is the Word of God!

Friend, whatever the Bible teaches to be the case actually is the case. When the Bible says that God *created* the world (Gen. 1), that actually is the case. When the Bible says that God parted the waters of the Red Sea to give the children of Israel safe passage to the other side (Exod. 14), that actually is the case. When the Bible says that Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave after Lazarus had been dead four days (John 11), that actually is the case. When the Bible says that Jesus arose from the grave (Matt. 28), that actually is the case. When the Bible says that Jesus ascended into the heavens (Acts 1), that actually is the case.

Over the past few years, I have seen lapel buttons, T-shirts, and bumper stickers with these words

imprinted, “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.” However, I think a more correct philosophy would be, “God said it. That settles it – whether I believe it or not.”

The Bible Is All-Sufficient

How wonderful it is to be assured that God has completely equipped us with all that we need in order to be saved and to serve Him acceptably.

Peter wrote, “...his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness...” (II Peter 1:3). Now, if God has given us **all** things that pertain to life and godliness, then there can be nothing which pertains to life and godliness which He has not given. Therefore, we conclude that we have received a revelation of **all** spiritual truth which is essential to salvation.

Once again, we turn to the powerful proclamation, regarding the Scriptures, penned by the apostle Paul to Timothy in II Timothy 3:16-17. He wrote,

All scripture is given by inspiration of God,
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for
correction, for instruction in righteousness:
That the man of God may be perfect, throughly
furnished unto all good works.

Note first the four ways in which Paul affirmed that the Scriptures completely equip us. (1) They are profitable for *doctrine*. (2) They are profitable for *reproof*. (3) They are profitable for *correction*. (4) They are profitable for *instruction in righteousness*. In a quite simplified summary, these four qualities of the Scriptures assure us that the Word of God is able to take us in any spiritual condition and, upon proper

response, lead us to become what we ought to be.

Also, note that when Paul said that the Scriptures completely furnish us “unto all good works,” we can be sure that everything which is essential to our salvation and acceptable spiritual service is revealed in the Word.

Consider these examples of the all-sufficiency of the scriptures:

- (1) The Word of God is able to convict us (Acts 2:37).
- (2) The Word of God is the source of our faith (Rom. 10:17).
- (3) The Word of God is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).
- (4) The Word of God equips us to resist temptation (Psm. 111:9).
- (5) The Word of God is the standard by which we determine truth (Gal. 1:8-9; 4:30a).
- (6) The Word of God is the “food” by which we grow spiritually (I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:17-18).
- (7) The Word of God is able to build us up (Acts 20:32).

The Bible is the complete revelation of spiritual truth, notwithstanding the modern-day claims of those who say that they have received revelations from God. I totally reject their claims. If what they have “received” is the same as what is found in the Bible, then it is not a new “revelation.” If it is something other than, or in addition to, what the Bible reveals, then the Bible would not be true in its claim of completeness, and could not be trusted.

Jude wrote of “...the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3, NKJV). There is no

need for any other revelation from God.

There is no need for any creed or statement of faith by man. The Bible is our “creed.” It is the only “statement of faith” that we need to offer people.

The Bible — Our Source Of Authority

During His earthly ministry, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Jesus as He was teaching, and said,

...By what authority doest thou these things?
and who gave thee this authority? (Matt.
21:23).

Everything that we teach and do religiously is either by divine authority or by human authority. And it is important to determine the authority for **everything** which we teach and do.

God has made it clear that the only thing pleasing to Him is that which He has authorized. Samuel was rebuked for not following the instructions from the Lord (I Sam. 15:22). Nadab and Abihu were punished for offering that for which they had no authority (Lev. 10:1-2).

Those who teach contrary to that which comes from God are to be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9). We are told not even to encourage those who teach contrary to the doctrine of Christ (II John 9-11).

In determining what we shall teach and do in service to God, let us have the same determination spoken by Balaam when he declared to the servants of Balak, “...I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord...” (Num. 22:18).

Paul wrote the same sentiment to the Corinthians.

He urged them "...not to go beyond the things which are written..." (I Cor. 4:6 ASV). The New King James Version translates it, "...not to think beyond what is written..."

Jesus also emphasized how crucial it is to do only what God has authorized. In the sermon on the mount, He preached that those who do not do the will of God shall not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21-23). And it is significant that this was said of those who were, nonetheless, zealously religious.

A sign that says, "Authorized Vehicles Only," has an unmistakable meaning. The sign, "Authorized Personnel Only" is likewise clear. Well, similarly, God has made it clear that only that which He has authorized is acceptable to Him.

We, the created, desire to serve and worship God, the creator. How shall we do it? By our own will, or by His? Whom shall we seek to please? Ourselves, or Him? If we are to please Almighty God, we must teach and do only that which He authorizes in His Word.

The Bible reveals the will of God to us, and in it alone we obtain divine authority for what we shall teach and do. **We have the right to do only what God has authorized through His Word.**

The Soldier's Knowledge Of The Guidebook

The soldier should be a diligent student of the Bible (Psm. 119:131). He should search the Scriptures daily as did the Bereans to make sure that what he is taught is true (Acts 17:10-11). The soldier should desire the sincere milk of the word that he might grow thereby (I Peter 2:2). He should hunger and thirst after

righteousness—the righteousness which the commands of God produce (Matt. 5:6; Psm. 119:172).

The soldier of Christ should treasure, read, study, believe and obey the precious Word of God. It should be more than the book that he uses to settle an occasional argument with a neighbor. The Bible should be his daily companion. It should be an integral part of his life.

Chapter 9

Equipment Of The Lord's Soldier

Winfred Clark



Winfred Clark presently serves as an elder of the Hobbs Street Church of Christ in Athens, Alabama (after several years of full-time preaching for this congregation) ~ He is the Director of the School of Bible Emphasis (with classes meeting in several states) ~ He has preached the gospel for almost fifty years (began in 1946) ~ Winfred and his wife Polly have two children.

Equipment of the soldier of the Lord is the topic of this lecture. Webster would say: “articles comprised in an outfit, as furnishings, the mental and temperamental traits and resources which equip a person.” Such would have to do with those things which would prepare the soldier for battle. It would have to do with the necessary things one would need to fight the good fight of faith.

Some of us were in Europe prior to D day. Massive amounts of equipment were being accumulated in England before the assault on the beaches of Normandy. No general would allow his men to go into battle without the best his country could provide. To have done less would mean the sacrifice of thousands. All of us can remember just how much emphasis was placed on equipment and proper preparedness before “Desert Storm.” There were a number of weeks spent in being sure the proper equipment was on the ground or

in the air. Surely we can see the need for being concerned about the matter of equipment in a spiritual struggle. After all, if we lose this battle we lose more than ground or physical things. To lose this battle means the loss of the souls of men and that is too high a price to pay.

There are a number of instances where this idea of warfare and conflict would be present in our Bible. For example,

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin (I Peter 4:1).

Paul used this figure of speech when he said,

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (II Tim. 2:3-4).

One will find within these verses the idea of a soldier and war. All of this would imply the need to be properly prepared. That is what we are talking about when we talk about equipment.

Peter used the word “arm.”

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin (I Peter 4:1).

This would mean one would need to be prepared with the same attitude. Paul exhorted his brethren to,

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11).

He would then proceed to describe the various articles he had in mind.

There Must Be The Awareness Of The Enemy

One is not going to prepare himself for battle if he is not aware that such a battle will indeed take place. One must be aware that a war is going on. We face real adversaries. Note,

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8).

Peter had no doubt at all about this very important fact. Jesus had warned him of such an adversary.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat (Luke 22:31).

Paul saw this very thing in the church at Corinth. He was well aware of what Satan could do and he told them about the matter.

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (II Cor. 11:3).

Paul would go far enough in the identification of this enemy to speak of some men as being his agents (II Cor. 11:12-13). It is easy sometimes in this war to lose sight of the real enemy. We see only the men involved and fail to realize who is behind this matter. We have no doubt about the fact that Satan will use men and that he is involved in opposition to Christians. This fact is pointed out by John (Rev. 2:10). We know that he will

do all he can to make men his agents. He used Judas (Luke 22:3; John 13:27). He used Peter (Matt. 16:23). He used Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10). So we need to realize that we do not wrestle against “flesh and blood” only. He is not to be taken lightly for he has had a part in the fall of great people.

Devices Of Satan. One needs to be aware of the fact that there are devices used by Satan. Note, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (II Cor. 2:11). These would have to do with his schemes or means to deceive. Take for example the first pair. Do you remember that he would seek to raise doubts concerning the Word of God? Note,

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (Gen. 3:1).

One can see his attack on the word of God. Such would seek to create a dissatisfaction with what God had said. The implications would be that such instructions would be too restrictive. It is almost as if he would say, “does God actually say you cannot eat of every tree?” Yes, that is exactly what God has said. You will also find that he is bold to deny the Word of God. God had said, “ye shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17). But Satan had no problem with a denial of the very thing that God had said. He said, “ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). One can see a total denial of what God had to say. But not only does his scheme seek to raise doubts about the Word of God, and deny the Word of God, he would also seek to attack the character of God. Note,

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:4-5).

We know how successful this scheme was with the first pair. This is the kind of thing Paul could see repeated in Corinth (II Cor. 11:1-4). Yes, he has his schemes and devices.

Servants And Sons. He not only has schemes and devices, he also has servants and sons. Jesus spoke to some of those and identified them.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

Jesus had no doubt about these people. He knew they were under the control of Satan. Such people are called “deceitful workers” (II Cor. 11:13). Paul described them as they really were. But what would you expect? They are merely imitating their father. They are called “evil workers” (Phil. 3:2). Yes, we must be aware of the enemy for he is real.

There Is The Armor That Must Be Put On

Paul would use the word “armor” as he writes to the church at Ephesus. Note, “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). Again, he would speak of such

when he said, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” (II Cor. 10:4). There can be no question about the fact that Christians have weapons, also, Christians must put on certain armor. Thus, the “putting on” is not an optional thing, it is a must. One cannot do what he is to do as a soldier without the proper armor. You will also note that the individual is to put on the armor. This is not something that is put on by another.

Paul would not tell his brethren to put on the armor of God, without identifying just what he had in mind. He would let them know the “putting on” is an individual thing. He would let them know it was an indispensable thing and a very important thing.

Take a moment to look at the nature of this armor. First, there is the truth with which one is to equip himself. “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...” (Eph. 6:14). There can be no doubt about the need for one having himself clothed with the truth. The Christians at Ephesus began their lives as Christians by obeying the truth.

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise (Eph. 1:13).

Again,

(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) (Eph. 5:9).

These folks have been commanded to speak the truth (Eph. 4:15). When Paul wrote to Timothy at Ephesus he would say,

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4).

But all of this is in harmony with the statement of Jesus who said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Peter said it was by the truth that one’s soul is purified (I Peter 1:22). There is also that which will guard against duplicity. Yes, this can be “the truth,” but it can also be the matter of sincerity and integrity. This shows one to be without an effort to deceive. As one wraps himself in the truth of God such will have an effect on his life. David addressed this fact,

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:
and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to
know wisdom (Psm. 51:6).

Herein one will find that which is called “the settled conviction of life.” All of this is according to truth. Thus one will be successful in battle because his life is governed by truth.

Second, there is that which guards against disobedience. Note, “Stand therefore...and having on the breastplate of righteousness” (Eph. 6:14). This means one stands in a right relationship to God. This insures that one is going to do what is right. His life will be lived in harmony with the truth. Isn’t this what God had to say about a man by the name of Abraham?

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:19).

This would be true of a man like Daniel. He would do right under all circumstances and this determination to do the will of God would offer great protection against the wiles and snares of the devil (Dan. 1:6-7; 6:10). But what would you expect of one who is governed by the truth? Will this not produce a righteous life? Surely right living in harmony with the will of God is great protection against the wiles of Satan. One can find a good illustration of this fact in the apostles. When they were told not to speak or teach anymore in the name of Christ, they had an answer for such. Note,

...Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:19-20).

They know they were going to do what was right because they walked in harmony with the truth.

Third, we need that which will help us to overcome discord. Man needs to be at peace with God, man and himself. How can this be done? How is such afforded? Let Paul tell us, “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15). Here is the case of a man who knows what he believes and why he believes it. He knows he serves a God of peace.

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you (Phil. 4:9).

Isaiah said Jesus would be the prince of peace,

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called

Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

Preparation by the gospel of peace will enable one to walk in difficult places. It will enable one to stand when others may fall. Being prepared will enable one to occupy his ground.

Fourth, we have armor that will help our distrust. Note, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16). Faith is surely that which will protect one from Satan's darts. There was a time when Jesus would ask His disciples a question in the midst of a storm. Remember:

And he said unto them, Where is your faith?
And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him (Luke 8:25).

Note, "where is your faith?" That would be equal in this case to "where is your shield?" One has but to take a look at the book of Hebrews to see how important this shield really is. Time and again you can see the use of this faith in this book. Noah would surely find occasion to use it (Heb. 11:7). What of Abraham (Heb. 11:8-10)? On and on one could go in this chapter seeing how these would have to depend on the shield of faith. One very vivid example would be that of Paul on the ship (Acts 27). You will recall they were in a storm. In fact, for many days they would be able to see neither sun nor stars. Can you imagine the stress one would face in situations like this? Yet, Paul is able to stand. Why? Listen to what he would have to say,

Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me (Acts 27:25).

Yes, his faith would help him to overcome whatever he might face.

Fifth, we need that which will help us to overcome doubts. “And take the helmet of salvation...” (Eph. 6:17). There can be no question but Satan would seek to place in question who we are. This is exactly the method he used with Jesus in the first recorded temptations.

And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread (Matt. 4:3).

He would seek to place the sonship of Jesus in the “if” category. If he could create a doubt concerning such then he would gain advantage. But Jesus had no doubt about His sonship. These to whom Paul would write this letter could also be confident of their position before God. They are seen as saints (Eph. 1:1). Note,

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise (Eph. 1:13).

There is no question about their salvation. Of this they could be confident. But, there are things that could cause one to doubt such. For example: There might be those in whom one has great confidence that would cease to believe and obey what these have believed and obeyed. If these are close friends, such would surely have a profound effect on a person. He might stop and begin to ask, “do these know something that I do not know?”

Suppose a member of one's family were to depart from the faith. Would this not have an effect on a person? It could. But suppose one came under the influence of a smooth speaker. Could that person cause one to believe he is wrong? Could that kind of a person unsettle one's mind? To ask those questions is to answer them. Yes, such can occur. Note,

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-7).

Oh yes, men can trouble the minds of children of God. But, if one is assured of his salvation, he will not lose the battle to such teachers.

Sixth, there is the need to defeat the enemy. Paul would say, "And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). When we take the sword of the Spirit, we take the teaching which the Holy Spirit provides. This is emphasized over and over in the New Testament. One can look at the language of the Lord in the book of John and see such to be the case. Note his prayer for His disciples.

I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth (John 17:14-17).

One can easily see that our Lord thought the Word would be that which would enable His disciples to overcome

the evil one. Is this not in harmony with the example He gave us when He was tempted? You will remember that He would use the Sword of the Spirit again and again. Note, He would say, “It is written” (Matt. 4:4). Also, “It is written again” (Matt. 4:7). Finally, “for it is written” (Matt. 4:10). Thus, when He was confronted with the archenemy of all mankind, He would use the Word of God. He had total and complete confidence therein. Surely, this ought to say something to men and women in the church of our Lord today. One need not have any doubt whatsoever about the power of the Word of God.

One can find this very thing to be the case with a situation in the Old Testament. Notice what God would have to say to Joshua after the death of Moses:

Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest (Josh. 1:6-7).

Notice that he will tell him to “be strong” twice within these verses. But did you notice the connection with the law of the Lord? His faithfulness to the law of God would engender strength.

We will find that Paul would do the very thing he would tell the disciples at Ephesus to do. When you watch this man cross the Roman empire with the gospel you will see how much confidence he had in God’s Word. In fact, it is interesting to see what Paul would have to

say about the sword of the Spirit, or the Word of God, and how he would use it. He would call it “the word of God” (Acts 13:46). He was not afraid to use it under all circumstances. Take the case of Athens. Here he is in a pagan city filled with idols (Acts 17:16). He would go on the offensive in that city with the sword of the Spirit (Acts 17:17-20). He would preach the Word to those who would be considered wise in that day (Acts 17:22-28). He was not afraid to tell them what was commanded (Acts 17:29). Again, take a look at what he would have to say about the gospel even in the city of Rome. This was the imperial city, the home of the emperor.

So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:15-16).

Paul knew that he would have nothing to fear with the gospel in the city of Rome. He knew he would wield the sword of the Spirit and that would be more powerful than anything Rome had to offer against it. He knew he would be well equipped to meet the onslaught of any and all ideologies.

There Is The Attitude Of Prayer That Is So Necessary

This is surely the attitude Paul would have.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may

open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak (Eph. 6:18-20).

One has noted that these verses will use the word “all” four times. All kinds of prayers are needed. These would include such prayers as public prayers. Would the ones heard by the prisoners in the jail at Philippi be like unto these? Surely prayers were needed as they faced their ordeals. You will also remember those who gathered in the home of Mary to pray for Peter. There are also the private prayers. There would and should be prayers of intercession. Peter was well aware of the fact that Jesus prayed for him. There was an occasion where he would say, “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Prayers would be needed at all times. Prayers would be needed always. That means the need would be continuous. Also, all the children of God are to be remembered in prayer. So we can see Paul was well aware of the fact that they would need to pray for God’s help as they faced the adversary. You will remember the warning given by Jesus to His disciples on the night before He would die the next day. Notice what He had to say,

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt. 26:41).

There was no question in the mind of the Lord about their need for prayer. He knew they would need to keep in mind what he had taught them to pray when he said, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” These would sure face the evil days and they would need God’s help to face such.

One thing we need to keep in mind is the fact that it was from a period of prayer that our Lord went out to meet the foe.

And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt...He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words (Matt. 26:39,42-44).

You will be well aware of the fact that His occurred in the garden. Three times it will be said, He prayed. But remember that He is about to encounter Satan and all of his forces. He is about to face the ordeal of the cross. He is now facing the climatic battle of the ages. The outcome of this conflict will settle the matter of man's redemption. Jesus knew full well what was ahead but He would not face it without praying. Now stop and think. If the Son of God saw the need for prayer in the face of conflict, what of us? Surely we know the answer to that question.

The Christian soldier will be well equipped when he is aware of the enemy he has, when he puts on the armor of God and when he approaches God in prayer. Then he is ready for battle.

Chapter 10

Qualities Of A Good Soldier Of Christ

Jimmy Clark



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There are many different figures in which God's people are identified in the Scriptures. When God wanted man to understand His people with relationship to the world, the term "church" was used. When God wanted man to understand His people with relationship to its government, the term "kingdom" was used. As far as the individuals in the church, they would be identified as saints. Paul wrote,

Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours (I Cor. 1:2).

As far as the individuals in the kingdom, they would be identified as servants. John wrote of the words of Jesus to Pilate,

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then

would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence (John 18:36).

When the Scriptures address the child of God as a soldier, such denotes the fact that God has an army. The term “army,” when it has reference to Christ and those who fight with Him, is not a frequent term in the New Testament. As a matter of fact, it is used quite rarely. John alludes to the army of Christ in the book of Revelation, where it is said,

And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean...And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army (Rev. 19:14,19).

However, there are many terms found in the New Testament which denote that the child of God is part of an army just like he/she is part of the body, kingdom, priesthood, or church of Christ.

The soldier aspect of the life of the child of God is not one which people often focus upon when looking at the time spent on this earth, yet it is very much on the mind of God as revealed in the Bible. Such terms as “fight,” “warfare,” “armor,” “weapons,” “captivity,” “withstand,” “resist,” “overcome,” etc., bear the figure of opposition which the child of God faces and will face. The first family on earth faced opposition from Satan and the last family on the earth will face the same. Peter exhorted,

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about,

seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world (I Peter 5:8-9).

Since mankind, especially the children of God, will face affliction from this adversary, it is vitally important that the child of God know and apply what is needed to be a good soldier of Christ. This is not the case just for the sake of the cause of Christ, but also for the eternal destiny of the souls of men.

Qualities Of Good Soldiers In The Old Testament

There is a great deal of information found in the Old Testament concerning those who fought on the Lord’s side which would give insights to what God desires in the good soldier for the cause of Christ today. The battle lines were drawn as indicated in a statement made by the Lord God to the serpent in the garden of Eden, where it is written,

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen. 3:15).

Though this is a direct reference to the coming of Christ through the seed of woman, it also bears the truth that there would be constant enmity between those of the seed of woman and those of the seed of Satan. The seed of woman would refer to those of the woman’s descendants who would oppose Satan and his forces. The seed of the serpent would refer to those who side with Satan and his qualities.

The first quality of a good soldier is found when

one sees the first reference of war in the Old Testament. It is found after Abram and Lot had separated themselves into their respected lands. Abram was at Hebron and Lot dwelt toward Sodom. The text states,

And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations: That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Seboim, and the King of Bela, which is Zoar (Gen. 14:1-2).

Through the course of the conflict, the invading armies captured the area of Sodom and Gomorrah which resulted in the capture of Lot and his goods as well (cf. Gen. 14:12). When the news of this came to the ears of Abram in Hebron, he took action. The text states,

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan (Gen. 14:14).

Here is a reference which gives some of the qualities of a good soldier. Abram did not lead into battle just any kind of servant which he had. Abram led 318 trained servants. The Hebrew word translated “trained” in this verse comes from a word which means “properly initiated; hence skilled, of tried fidelity, tried, proved, experience, proof” (Gesenius, **Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament**, p. 292). Training is vital to the success of any army. These servants of Abram had been prepared to fight if such were needed.

A second quality of the good soldier is seen in

Abram’s words to the king of Sodom when they returned from the battle. Abram himself led the army to victory over a more formidable force which could not be withstood by the kings of the Jordan valley. When the king of Sodom asked for the people and suggested that Abram take the spoils, the text states,

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich (Gen. 14:22-23).

Abram had made a promise to the Lord before he left to bring Lot back and the Lord was with him. Here is the key to success for the soldier of God. His dependence is upon the God before whom he lives and moves and has his very being. God confirmed such to Abram in the battle. It was further stated to Abram in the next chapter of Genesis,

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward (Gen. 15:1).

Once can trace the successes and failures of many soldiers and armies which followed or refused to follow this fact. The song of the Israelites after the Egyptians were drown in the Red Sea underscores this truth.

The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name (Exod. 15:2-3).

Jonathan said to the young man who bare his armor,

...Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few (I Sam. 14:6).

David said to Goliath,

This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands (I Sam. 17:46-47).

These are but a few of the accounts where those who fought the enemies of God went with God.

A third quality of a good soldier is seen in the man Joshua. When the Amalekites attacked the children of Israel after the exodus from Egypt, the text states,

And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill (Exod. 17:9-10).

Though this third quality would be true of any good soldier, it was especially true with Joshua. Obedience to the one who is in authority is a must for being a good soldier. This was the first time the nation was asked to fight after leaving Egypt. Their success was with the

Lord who saw the hands of Moses lifted up to Him. Joshua did not question what Moses said. His will was but to do what Moses said.

A fourth quality in all good soldiers of God is seen in the scene at the foot of Mt. Sinai. When Moses came down from the mount and saw the great sin which the people had committed in turning from God to idols, the text states,

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD' S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day (Exod. 32:26-29).

The sons of Levi showed their faithfulness to the Lord in their consecration to the Lord that day by slaying those who had committed great abomination in the sight of God. Moses knew, as well as all in the army of God, that purity of faith and morals are essential to being in fellowship with the Lord God who is holy.

A fifth quality of a good soldier is seen in the two men Joshua and Caleb in their stand against the report of the ten spies who brought an evil report. The ten spies lacked faith in God and thus lacked the courage to

go with God to conquer the land. Many a soldier has been defeated because of fear. Caleb's words to the people bear out his faith and courage in God.

If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not (Num. 14:8-9).

Courage coupled with the knowledge that God is with you is found throughout the Old Testament as a necessary quality to fight the good fight. Moses reminded the second generation which came out of the land of Egypt of the need of faith and courage to enter into the promised land (cf. Deut. 1:19-38). Moses continued to say to the second generation what would be said before the army of God went into battle against the Canaanites.

And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you (Deut. 20:2-4).

Moses continued to say what the officers would stress before any fighting would take place. They would ask for those who had build a new house and not dedicated it, those who had planted a vineyard and not eaten of it, and those who had betrothed a wife and not taken

her to go home. Then the text records,

And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart (Deut. 20:8).

The army of God would not be made of those whose hearts were not with God. Even after Moses dies, God stresses to Joshua four times in one discourse to be strong and of good courage (Josh. 1:6,7,9,18).

A sixth quality of a good soldier as seen in the Old Testament is that he fights with those who are with the Lord and not against them. Unity is a major factor in the success of God's army. This is brought out when the children of Reuben and Gad, asked for their inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan river. Moses recorded the request,

And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them?...And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones: But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land...And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the Lord to war, And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the Lord, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, And the land be subdued before the Lord:

then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out (Num. 32:6-7, 16-17, 20-23).

Jesus Himself said,

...Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand (Matt. 12:25).

A seventh quality of a good soldier is asking counsel of the Lord before one does anything. It is presumptuous to think that man can fight without seeking the wisdom of God on the matter. This quality is illustrated in the very beginning of the book of Judges.

Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand (Judges 1:1-2).

There had been a time when the nation acted without consulting God. Such created a problem for the nation (cf. Josh. 9:14).

These qualities are just a few of the characteristics that were necessary to pleasing the Lord of hosts. They typify the nature of the spiritual soldier of Christ as seen in the New Testament. The soldier of the cause of Christ needs the same God as the soldier of the army of Israel.

Quotations Concerning Good Soldiers In The New Testament

Consider now some passages found in the New Testament which are quite similar in content to the thoughts previously presented from the Old Testament. Some of these passages will involve statements involving actual military personnel as well as the spiritual soldier of Christ.

Matthew recorded of a day when Jesus was in the city of Capernaum. That particular day was marked by a meeting of Jesus and a certain centurion who had a servant who was sick with palsy. Notice the words which the centurion said to Christ,

...Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it (Matt. 8:8-9).

Here is a soldier who knew what was essential to be a soldier. He not only had soldiers under him but he was under another as a soldier. He knew the importance of authority and how it was to work. Jesus commended the centurion for his attitude and faith. Think of the nature of authority and the qualities of a good soldier of Christ. The Christian is in the Lord's army. When the centurion said "speak the word only," such would be sufficient for the soldier of Christ to obey. He already respected Jesus for who He was. He only needed the word from Christ to satisfy the situation. Here one sees that the commandments of the Lord are not taken lightly. They are not considered dead letters. They are

meant to be heard and heeded. Think about a soldier of Christ who disregards the commandments from the Christ. What would happen to a soldier in any nation's army which would not regard the orders from one in authority? Each soldier must understand his role in the army. That role is to obey the word passed down from the top.

Luke records an example of a soldier who was placed in a position of responsibility concerning the apostle Paul.

And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him (Acts 28:16).

The word translated "kept" means the same as what the soldiers did to Peter as recorded in Acts 12:4. Jesus alluded to the importance of keeping when He was challenged about His power to cast out demons.

When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils (Luke 11:21-22).

A good soldier is to protect that in which he has been entrusted. Paul wrote to Timothy,

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen (I Tim. 6:20-21).

Moving from examples of military soldiers in a national army, consider now some examples of Christians who were identified as spiritual soldiers of Jesus Christ. Paul spoke of Archippus as “our fellowsoldier” (Philemon 2). More is said of another fellowsoldier whose name is found in the book of Philippians.

Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick...Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me (Phil. 2:25-26,30).

Here one sees a fellowsoldier of the cause of Christ who did not regard his life as more important than the work he was doing. Here is a great quality of a good soldier. Is it not the case that a soldier understands that he is sacrificing himself for the cause to which he is committed? Have there not been many people who gave their physical lives for causes which they considered to be very honorable? How much more honorable is it for a soldier of Christ to give his life for the cause of Christ? Epaphroditus had the same spirit as a soldier as Paul did. Paul spoke concerning himself,

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

When Paul was begged not to go to Jerusalem because of the report from Agabus that Paul would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, Paul said,

...What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 21:13).

Paul wrote of Priscilla and Aquila,

Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles (Rom. 16:4).

This sounds like the language which David used when three of his best soldiers broke through the army of the Philistines to get David a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem.

And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest (I Chron. 11:19).

The apostle Paul had trained many different people to be soldiers of the cross. He knew through inspiration and experience what it was to be a spiritual soldier.

Paul wrote to Timothy that the good soldier must war a good warfare (I Tim. 1:18). There are passages in the New Testament which address a warfare which is not beneficial to the cause of Christ.

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? (James 4:1).

The good soldier must realize that he is not to war and fight against those who are on the side of Christ. Again,

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members (Rom. 7:22-23).

The good soldier must also realize that he has a constant battle with the things which plague the individual life. Peter said of this,

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul (I Peter 2:11).

The good fight must center upon those things which promote purity and wholeness within the Christian's inner man, his relationship to God and his place in the church.

Paul also wrote to Timothy,

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (II Tim. 2:3-4).

The good soldier knows that he will face opposition which will require endurance. Suffering is a constant plight of the good soldier. Look at what Paul said in the book of II Timothy.

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God (II Tim. 1:8).

For the which cause I also suffer these things:

nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day (II Tim. 1:12).

Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him... (II Tim. 2:9-12).

Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:11-12).

Paul also stressed to Timothy how that the good soldier does not mix the affairs of this life with his business of pleasing the one who chose him to be a soldier. The good soldier is committed to the work before him. The world can offer so many distractions which can take the mind off the value of the struggle. Paul mentioned to Timothy in the latter part of this letter,

For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world... (II Tim. 4:10).

While Paul was suffering as a prisoner in Rome on the first occasion, Demas was there with him (Col. 4:14; Philemon 24). Something happened to this fellowlaborer between Paul's first Roman imprisonment and his second. Demas had let the influence of this world turn him from being a fellowlaborer and fellowsoldier. The

good soldier lives to please the one who chose him, not to please himself. The one who fights the good fight will also receive the crown of life which the Lord will give to those who love him (cf. II Tim. 4:7-8).

Quest Of The Good Soldier Of Christ

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth concerning the Christian's warfare.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:3-5).

Paul wrote to the Ephesian brethren,

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench

all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Eph. 6:10-18).

One of the great differences between a good soldier of Jesus Christ and a soldier of any other type is in the nature of the war in which he/she is fighting. Basic military conflict seeks to overcome the enemy through destroying the enemy by killing or by capture. There have been religions which viewed their role as soldiers of Christ to launch a crusade of bloodshed upon all who would not yield to the demands given. Today, there are still people who consider carnal warfare as a holy war in the name of their god. Paul wanted the early church, as well as the church in any generation, to know that the soldier of Christ is not out to destroy men's lives, but to seek to bring them to the obedience of Christ. The enemy of man is Satan. The good soldier is seeking to bring the mind of the one who has been taken captive by Satan to see the deception and yield to the will of Christ. The equipment of the good soldier of Christ is spiritual just like the kingdom is spiritual (cf. John 18:36). Seeking to convert the minds of men from error to truth is like pulling down strong holds. Getting people to abandon things that are based upon man's imaginations and intellectual elitism for the true knowledge of God is a massive undertaking. Leading the thoughts of men to submit to the obedience of faith and to abhor the philosophies of men can be a struggle greater than any physical endeavor.

The good soldier also knows that such a quest is

not without strong opposition from spiritual wickedness in high places. Satan does not sit idly by while the soldiers of Christ lead those whom he has deceived to desire the grace of God through Jesus Christ. Satan does not fight fair and seeks to win at any cost. However, God has provided for the good soldier the necessary armor to stand against the foe. God will not allow Satan to do more than he knows the individual can bear (cf. I Cor. 10:13). God will provide the grace to see a person through who puts his life in the care of God (II Cor. 12:9). The good soldier must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (cf. Eph. 6:10). He must put on the whole armor, take his stand, pray, watch, and persevere. The one who was inspired to pen those words said toward the end of his life,

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (II Tim. 4:7-8).

The quest of the good soldier is no less than to please the one who chose him to be a soldier, to encourage others to be and do the same, and to receive the crown of life from the One whom he served.

Chapter 11

Aggressive, Fighting, Warring, Defending

James W. Boyd



James' parents were Bowling and Louise Boyd; born April 15, 1930 ~ Reared in Donelson, TN ~ Attended David Lipscomb College; Vanderbilt University; Alabama Christian School of Religion ~ Began preaching in 1952 ~ Local work in Indiana, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi ~ Married Rosalyn Hale ~ Four children; nine grandchildren ~ Presently at the East End church in McMinnville, TN (since July, 1985).

The Holy Spirit has used various illustrations and analogies to present to us the life, duty, and privileges of being a Christian. Christian living is pictured: as a walk with the Lord (Phil. 3:16); as laboring in His vineyard (Matt. 20:1); like running a race (Heb. 12:1); and is compared to a soldier involved in warfare (II Tim. 2:2). It is this last impression that is being emphasized in this series of lectures. It may well be that the nature of being a Christian as a soldier in war is what makes being a Christian the most difficult for many people. In no other illustration as a Christian is there a greater demand for responsibility, performance, character, and obedience.

Jude 3 reads,

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

The word translated “contend earnestly,” used only here in the New Testament, conveys the concept of very strenuously striving on behalf of something. “The faith” is that for which we, as Christians, must contend. We are instructed **what** we are to do, “contend;” **how** to do it, “earnestly;” and **for what**, “the faith.” There must be militancy and combativeness in our service.

Ezekiel 3:17; 33:1-9 presents the servant of God as a watchman. He has the responsibility to be on guard, provide for the protection of others, be aware and attentive sufficiently to alert to danger. It is not unfair to say, although it is a marvel the extent of failure to stay abreast, that many who are in leadership and teaching positions and who have the duty of being watchmen are the very ones far too often who take a negative attitude toward keeping aware, staying alert, and protecting the flock over which they have responsibility and oversight. Dangers against truth, which means danger to souls, can be raging for years before some even know what is happening. Doubtless, this dereliction of duty has paved the way for false teachers and false doctrines to be injected into the church. Seeking peace at any price, some shy away from combatting error and those who are determined to promote it.

Most Prefer There Be No Conflict

We must grant that there is usually a distaste among most people for conflict. We would all prefer that everyone be in agreement and live in harmony. The Christian does all he can to make that condition a reality.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men (Rom. 12:18).

We would entertain grave concern for those who might prefer struggle to tranquility. But the very nature of being a disciple of Christ will bring conflict. Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). He went on to say that following Him may well bring separation from those with whom we have strong ties in this life. The peace that Christ brought is the reconciliation between man and God, spiritual peace. Seeking this peace often produces conflict with those around us.

Why does the gospel cause so much controversy? Seeing the blessing provided for man in living by the gospel, noting how it is the noblest and best life one can live, it would seem that all would seek it and pursue it. But because of man's love for sin, rejection of authority, and the disposition he develops to "do his own thing," he runs counter to the teaching of the Lord. He raises his opposition, with futility, against the God of heaven and any who would decide to follow the Savior. We are warned, "Marvel not if the world hate you" (I John 3:13). "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). This hatred is transferred into warfare.

A Spiritual Warfare

But our warfare is of a special kind. It is not carnal warfare.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the know-

ledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:3-5).

It is correct to say we are battling for the minds, hearts, and souls of men. Once the heart is won for the Lord, the life that person lives will seek righteousness. We seek salvation for all, but all must take advantage of the offer God makes.

It has been a stain upon religion that carnal warfare has sometimes been used to promote and defend what has been erroneously called “Christianity.” Even now, some religions willingly utilize carnal warfare for their religious goals, such as branches of Islam. But not so with true disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Our Enemy

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8).

Although the devil often uses people to advance his evil work, and some are identified as children of the devil (John 8:44) and of hell (Matt. 23:15), people are not the ultimate enemy. We, like Christ, are to love all men, and we seek their salvation. It is the devil, Satan, who is the accuser and deceiver (I John 3:8; Rev. 12:9) working his wiles, subtilty, and snares (II Cor. 11:3; Eph. 6:11). It is needful that we, as soldiers of Christ, ever be mindful of who the real enemy is, and that our goal is that of saving those held captive by him. This being true, our means and methods of attack and defense should be directed against evil, not singularly against people per se. This is true even though there must be times when we should identify by name those who are

of Satan's army, even as did Paul (I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 2:17). Could it be that some, being more fearful of offending the Lord's opponents than they are desirous of saving souls, would have us reject the work of Paul as he fought the good fight? Opposing error is not making personal attacks against men. Opposing error is essential in the contest for the souls of men just as much as presenting the way of salvation. Some today need to learn this. It is not unloving to withstand the gainsayer. It is unloving to do otherwise. How glaringly faulty it is to condemn all judging as some erroneously do, but they find no difficulty in judging others to be unloving simply because the ones they judge are doing as they are taught in Scriptures to do regarding the truth.

Aggressive

We speak of manner just here rather than message. The message that we proclaim is the gospel. How do we go about doing that? Christians are not people who go about just looking for a fight for the sake of being in a fight, even though fighting is inevitable. We do not simply seek to make arguments in the sense of being quarrelsome. We must make arguments in the sense of making points and establishing them with evidence. We must not confuse being aggressive with being obnoxious, contentious, rude, loud, and spewing fiery and provocative rhetoric. Some might be like a preacher who had written in his notes beside one point to yell loudly there because he was not quite sure of that point. To be aggressive means to be energetic and very active. We are not to be aggressive in the sense of making a wrongful intrusion, such as one nation violating lawlessly the borders of another. Rather, is it more like being zealous, which we

are expected to be (Titus 2:14)? We are to go about serving the Lord with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength (Luke 10:27). Paul taught the early church to “speak the *truth in love*” (Eph. 4:15). There must abide in our heart and motive a love for God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, truth, the lost, the saved, and those who were once among us but who have fallen away. There is no excuse for being unloving. But some have mistakenly concluded to offer opposition to false ways is somehow synonymous with lacking love. Whether such critics are aware of it or not, that is a severe indictment against Christ, the apostles, and the early church who were faithful to God. We are not to be slothful (Rom. 12:11), but do what we do with all our might. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might” (Eccl. 9:10). Paul was certainly zealous in his life before (Gal. 1:14) and after becoming a Christian.

Paul said he “fought a good fight” (II Tim. 4:6-8). He could not have anticipated the “crown of righteousness” if he had done otherwise. The way he went about his work is an example for all who follow him (I Cor. 11:1) as he imitated Christ. Would it have been possible for Paul and others to have accomplished what they did without being aggressive? So impressed were those who resisted the gospel that they complained, “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also” (Acts 17:6). We doubt that the enemies of the Lord and man will ever be shaken and apprehensive with the timid and shy way some present the gospel, almost as if they, unlike Paul (Rom. 1:16), are ashamed of what it demands. Are we to attempt to make ourselves and the gospel pleasing to men and win their applause, or are we to please God by convicting the sinner of the

error of his way and showing them the path to life (Gal. 1:10)? To ask is to answer for the sincere disciple.

The makers of idols felt the effect of their aggression (Acts 19). While we do not measure success or failure by whether we cause a riot or not, is it not evident that when the early Christians went about the work of preaching the gospel that those in sin and error were disturbed? Trying to simply win friends, be elected “man of the year,” and running alongside false teachers for their favor is hardly the way of Paul.

Do we not see aggression in the way Paul dealt with Elymas when he sought to distract Sergius Paulus from the gospel (Acts 13)? Aggression is pressing the attack into enemy territory, casting down, pulling down, proving, rebuking, rooting out, destroying, throwing down (II Cor. 10:5; Jer. 1:10; II Tim. 4:2) as well as planting, building up, exhorting, and bringing the lost into captivity to the Lord.

Have you ever wondered just what direction the early church might have taken regarding the Mosaic law if Paul had not been aggressive in withstanding Peter and others who had adopted a false position (Gal. 2)? Paul imitated that confrontation opening because error had been presented openly. But Paul was not the cause of the trouble. As always, the cause of trouble is sin and error. Correcting such things is the righteous sequence that must follow the teaching of error. What might have been the case if brethren had not engaged in an open and frank discussion about such matters in Jerusalem (Acts 15) and rightly concluded to follow the way the Holy Spirit directed? If some living today had been present in these situations, cannot you hear them saying, “We better love everybody and not cross

anybody”? How foreign to the love taught in the New Testament, some have gone in their refusal to be the aggressive soldier of the cross that Paul commended and commanded. Most who criticize criticism and erroneously condemn all judging are not hesitant to judge others to be unloving simply because they are doing as Scripture teaches them to do regarding the faith. Some vigorously argue against arguing and even debate against debating. What is that saying about consistency being a jewel? Ignoring doctrines that take brethren into apostasy is heresy itself if not blatant cowardice.

Other Aggressive Servants Of God

Jonathan was aggressive when he and his servant attacked an entire garrison of the Philistines (I Sam. 14). He knew “there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few” (v. 6). David was both defensive of the cause of the Lord and offensive when he fought the giant (I Sam. 17:29). He intended to remove the reproach the heathen had inflicted against Israel and take the battle directly to him.

What shall we say of Gideon (Judges 7)? Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest of the Army of the Confederacy had the reputation when facing the enemy, especially when outnumbered, to divide his forces, properly deploy them, and attack. Actually, he was taking a page from God’s strategy that Gideon followed against the Midianites.

John the Baptist is a classic example and demonstration of an aggressive proclaimer of the truth of God. He went into the midst of a religion that had been operative for many centuries, proclaimed the coming of a new way and new leader, exposed the errors of the

traditions of men, condemned the sins of both the high and low, called for repentance and preparation to receive the Christ. Evidently, Christ Himself was of this same manner because when our Lord came upon the scene some confused Him with the aggressive prophets of the past, and John the Baptist come back to life. It is surely a compliment to those men that they behaved themselves in such manner and went about their task with such fervor that when the Lord came, some compared Him with them. How would we compare today? Do you suppose we represent the way and manner of Christ when we extend fellowship to those who rebel at His way? When Christ associated with the lost He always had the pull going His direction. He never did “go along” with error to gradually sway the wrongdoer. Why should we? Shall we do evil that good may come (Rom. 3:8)? Are we wiser in winning souls than was the Lord Himself?

A Positive And Negative Warfare

The fact that in the Christian’s armor (Eph. 6) there is both the sword (v. 17) and the shield (v. 16) shows we fight both offensively and defensively. The shield, our faith, quenches the fiery darts of the wicked. The sword, the Word of God, is two-edged and cuts in both directions (Heb. 4:12). Is it not a sad commentary how some “soldiers” are so negative about negative warfare? They mistakenly presume that simply presenting the positive side of truth is sufficient. If only such people could have counseled with God when He gave the Ten Commandments and caused the New Testament to be written, possibly God could have included their superior wisdom, likely gained from their pursuit of the academic

wisdom of men. Is God disadvantaged for not having studied at one of these liberal and modernistic seminaries? Without the positive, men will never know what God has done and what they must do to be saved or why. But without the negative, how can we know what to avoid, prevent, correct, and discipline? As good soldiers, we must learn to rigidly use all the armor of our spiritual warfare that God has provided.

While we must diligently strive to present the “whole counsel of God” as did Paul (Acts 20:27) (and this is what it means to have our preaching “balanced”), we must never be guilty of compromising truth. Trust is of God and it is not ours to compromise even if we were of the disposition to do so. Who is so arrogantly presumptuous that he assumes the right to tamper in any way with “thus saith the Lord”? The Word of the Lord needs nor allows changing it. Some appear to think it convenient to twist or wrest the Word to accommodate men in sin. Never is this so pronounced than in the area of worldliness. But it has reached into the teaching of Christ regarding worship, marriage and divorce, even the plan of salvation and the pattern of things delivered by the Lord. Why anyone should feel it necessary to stretch the Word of God to include what it excludes can likely be for no other motive than seeking numbers and acceptance. God be their judge! But “ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:16). To compromise truth in any direction, whether left or right, will diminish it to something less than truth. The Lord has not commissioned us to go into the world and negotiate peace with the servants of the devil, but to preach the gospel so that they might hear, believe, obey, live, glorify God, and go to heaven. The aggressive soldier does this with

sincerity, without pretense, with unfeigned love, no hypocrisy, and determination that there is no substitute for victory.

There are those things the Christian must be **FOR**. At the same time, there are those things he must be **AGAINST**. Indeed, he must be **AGAINST** everything that is against what he must be **FOR**. This only underscores the positive, negative, and aggressive nature of the warfare of the soldier in the Lord's army.

It Involves Being Defensive

Paul said he was "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17). There is more in fighting the good fight than just showing where something is wrong. There is more than just showing what is right. There must be the defense of the truth against that which detracts from it and would negate it. Men have studiously sought ways to get around God's truth on nearly every point from the creation to heaven. Nothing has escaped the onslaughts of ideas that, if believed, must and would declare Biblical truth to be error. Therefore, contrary to the thinking of some, truth does need defense. To contend otherwise is to contradict Paul's readiness to defend it.

To be able to defend the truth requires knowledge of both the truth and the error that is arrayed against it. Faithful brethren must learn as best they can to disarm the enemy and seize his weaponry. Our attitude toward what is contrary to the will of God must be like that of the Edomites toward Israel when Israel wanted to go through their land. They said, "Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword" (Num. 20:18). To the enemy and his servants we declare, "Thou shalt not pass!"

Our defense is not to be a personal defense. When Christ was reviled, He reviled not again (I Peter 2:23). Even before Pilate, there were times when He did not even take the option to respond to him, as it was prophesied concerning Him (Isa. 53:7; Matt. 27:14). His concern was not for Himself, but for the truth. It is most interesting that Paul’s answers before the various courts was more of a repetition of the gospel than a personal defense.

Times may well come that we suffer for righteousness sake (II Tim. 3:12; Matt. 5:10-12). But what of that? Shall we demean the truth we uphold by resorting to either a personal attack on our opponents or making a personal defense of ourselves? Our attitude toward such hardship should be like that Paul expressed,

But I would ye should understand, brethren,
that the things which happened unto me have
fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the
gospel (Phil. 1:12).

Loyalty to the cause is our aim in being militant. General Douglas MacArthur once commented concerning his loyalty to the things he learned at West Point. He said, “The corps, the corps, the corps.” So we say, the truth and cause of Christ, first, last, and always, for this is our reason for our standing fast in the faith, and the basis of our hope. When we are aggressive, fighting, warring, defending, that is always paramount in our heart.

A Companion Of The Soldier

There is so much in Scripture about the soldier of Christ, the faithful disciple of the Lord, being bold and courageous. We do not fear what men might do to us

(Heb. 13:6). Look at the demeanor of Peter and John when they were brought before authorities who threatened them if they did not cease to fill Jerusalem with the doctrine they were commissioned of God to teach. How did they react to missiles of intimidation hurled against them?

But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard...And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word (Acts 4:19-20,29).

Seeing how the apostles continued their preaching, other measures were taken against them and they were beaten and further charged not to teach. Acts 5:41-42 tells us,

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

How appropriate that the Holy Spirit used Peter to write to all Christians that it is not a shame to suffer for His name, or on His behalf (I Peter 4:16). They did not presume that self-defense was necessary, but they did defend the truth they taught.

Unnecessary Fighting

While there are those matters over which we must fight in order for truth to prevail, there are also some matters that do not deserve our energies of combat.

But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain (Titus. 3:9).

Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do (I Tim. 1:4).

Paul taught Timothy not to strive about words to no profit (II Tim. 2:14). He is not saying that words do not matter. But some words do not really matter in the overall scheme of things. Why wrangle about such things?

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes (II Tim. 2:23).

There simply are those things which are not revealed over which we ought not wage battle. Even matters of indifference and opinion should not be the cause of warring (Rom. 14). It is sometimes amazing what arouses people into a fighting rage. We must learn to discern when to fight, for what to fight, and when not to fight.

Particularly reprehensible is it when brethren get into a spat against each other over some friction that has arisen between them and they carry it into combat. Did Paul and Barnabas carry their differences as chips on their shoulders? Did they not both stand for truth and went about proclaiming it as they each thought the best way? Was the matter of taking John Mark of such moment that they disturbed the entire brotherhood over it? How many need this lesson today, and ought keep their personal squabbles from mushrooming into a brotherhood contest. This is not the kind of battles the Lord would have us fight.

Beware Of The Traitor

Christ had His Judas (Matt. 26:48-49). Paul had his Demas (II Tim. 4:10). John wrote of Diotrophes (III John 9). It should not shock us to be confronted with those who seek to undermine and undo our labors. In recent years certain words have come to light that describe a traitor, one who consorts with the enemy. In the Spanish Civil War, when the forces of Franco were marching in four columns against the city of Madrid, those sympathetic with Franco who lived inside the city were termed as a fifth column. "Fifth Column" has come to be synonymous with betrayal. The word "quisling" refers to a person who treacherously helps to prepare the way for enemy occupation of his own country. It is taken from the name of a Norwegian politician who aided Germany during the occupation of Norway during World War II. Such terms as "fifth column" and "quisling" are proper descriptions of the liberal and modernistic "change agents" in the church who wish to turn us into just another denomination, doctoring and altering the teaching of Christ to suit their whims and fancies. Enemies outside the camp are dangerous, but not near so deadly as the deceptive enemies who lie within. As we go about our battle, we must keep our eye on those who show themselves to be betrayers. We may well, like the rebuilders of Jerusalem, build with one hand and fight off the enemy with the other, even taking note of those who would attack from the rear and within.

It is not hard to make the case that much of the reason for the slow down of the growth of the church in recent years has been due to the forced attention being

given to the Judases, Demases, and Diotropheses, and it has detracted from the efforts to be more evangelistic. There comes a time when we have to recognize just who these people are, mark them, avoid them, have nothing whatever to do with them, and get on with the war that the Lord wants us to fight for lost souls who have not yet heard. I am persuaded that such time is long overdue already. Why should we forever do combat with those who were once of us but have gone out from us? Let them go! It is their sinful choice! Having done what we can to restore them, seeing that it is to no avail, as painful as it is to realize their souls are lost, dare we allow them to corrupt the entire army and subvert the entire campaign? God forbid! We should be better soldiers than that to allow it.

A Centered Attention

Distractions and diversionary tactics can be a hindrance to a soldier. If the enemy can get one to divide his attention rather than keeping clear focus on the warfare, he has made a major advance. Paul knew that,

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (II Tim. 2:4).

This addresses the issue of priorities. The Christian is in this world, even though not of this world. Nonetheless, he has certain duties and work that he must attend, such as maintaining life, providing for those who are in his care, paying his bills, and all the other things that are necessary in the conduct of human existence. However, such things are not to be first in his life. Being a soldier of Christ is not a part time occupation, but a

full time event. Everything he does he does in the light of being a Christian. He does not involve himself in the affairs of day to day living to such an extent that his more serious duties to God are compromised or neglected. The Lord knows we have need of such things that are necessary to life (Matt. 6:32), but he keeps God's kingdom and His righteousness in first place (Matt. 6:33).

The often heard excuse that one is "too busy" to be involved in worship, winning souls, working on behalf of the church is just what the Lord rebukes. We should not let ourselves be so extended in lesser matters that we begin to minor in majors and major in minors. Our warfare demands prime time and attention.

Battle Plans

Every battle should be engaged only after plans and strategies have been well conceived. To rush into the fray in a haphazard manner will not bring the desired results, and may even produce losses that could otherwise be prevented. God's people go about their work in an orderly fashion. We are now addressing the means and methods of fighting the war.

The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God as the medium by which He works and operates on the hearts of both saints and sinners. So there can be no successful waging of the spiritual war without the proper use and handling aright the Word. All the gimmicks and gadgets that people may consider useful are most often hindrances and are of no value whatever when the Word does not have the leading role.

We should not become so obsessed with methods that we forget the message. What good does it do to effectively convey the wrong message? Over the past

few years it seems that tremendous emphasis has been placed on methods of teaching more than what is being taught. Many brethren have opted for the imitation of the methods used by denominations rather than concentrating on public and private teaching which is foremost. We need to remember that the methods used to teach error are not always the best in teaching the truth. Liberties can be taken with truth when error is the lesson. But truth must be taught harmoniously with truth. About all we can learn from denominations is to disrespect what the Word teaches in favor of what people want for themselves. We are wise to study how best to reach the lost, convert the soul, and strengthen the church. Having done that, we must realize the best method is useless until it is actually used. No method will work when there is a void of knowledge of the Word of God.

We may not always be as successful as we would like to be. Sometimes we may suffer a temporary defeat in our Christian warfare, but we can live to fight another day. One thing is certain, however, and that is the ultimate victory belongs to those who are faithful in Christ, who finish the course, keep the faith, and fight the good fight. Serving in the army of the Lord and doing battle against the foes is a warfare where victory is assured in Christ. “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 15:57).

What If We Don't Fight?

We need to consider the consequences of our failure to go to war. Do you realize how this will affect your eternal destiny? And what of those of the oncoming

generation as well as people far and wide who have yet to learn the way of Christ? If we do not battle for what is right, who will? We are locked in a warfare that will result in either spiritual life or spiritual death. We cannot back away from it.

We commend the theme of this series of lectures on **Soldiers Of Christ**. Having learned what has been brought to our attention, let us lift the royal banner and go onward to battle under the leadership of the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10). Let us do so with the fervor and commitment required of us as if we really mean it, for surely we do!

Chapter 12

Every Man Stood In His Place

Bob Berard



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One of the most memorable moments of genuine greatness in the ongoing battle of good against evil is found in Judges 7 as God's and Gideon's small band of heroes confront the thousands of Midianites who had overrun Israel's homeland. The text reporting this thrilling scene tells us that Gideon and three hundred men had secretly surrounded the massive camp of foreign invaders during the night and were holding torches hidden inside of pitchers in their left hands and trumpets in their right when Gideon's signal came; then, all three hundred blew their trumpets and broke the pitchers letting their torches shine, and shouting, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" (Judges 7:15-20). The text goes on to note that the soldiers "**...stood every man in his place round about the camp...**" The narrative continues reporting details of Israel's overthrow of the many times more numerous Midianite forces, but in the verse just quoted, in the standing of the three hundred,

the upset, the battle outcome unexpected by unbelievers, was realized. God's people acting as God's people should act were victorious, and they were victorious because faithfully, courageously, and steadfastly **every man stood in his place.**

The study before us is particularly concerned with the "standing" on this notable day in Israel of old with the intention of making application of the lessons learned to our lives today in the "standing" we are called to do (Eph. 6:11,14; I Peter 1:20-21; II Thess. 2:14). Our time is in many ways different than Gideon's, but in crucial matters, such as the spiritual challenge faced and the eternal consequences of victory and failure, our lot is the same (Eccl. 1:9; Rom. 6:23). Gideon's forces, evidently on the basis of their faith in God, chose to defend the cause of right despite overwhelming odds. In our day there is the same basic choice of serving or not serving the Commander-in-Chief of righteousness in all-out warfare against evil (Matt. 7:13-14). Those who serve the Lord do so with relatively far fewer soldiers, but they invariably win the victory; on the other hand, those who do not serve the Lord are in opposition to the Almighty, and though they join with the vast majority of accountable men under the potent arch-advocate of evil, they are certain to go down to eternal defeat (Rev. 17:14). Learning something of the stand of Gideon's men will help us choose as we should and thus attain the victory crown (Rev. 2:10).

It should be noted that the very moment of Gideon's stand is not the whole of the story nor does it hold the only noteworthy lessons about standing as one should. The Bible records numerous happenings preceding this salient battle stand and these happenings reveal factors

contributing to the battle’s success. Obvious from the Bible account of Judges 6 and 7 is the fact that Gideon himself required considerable preparation before he led the commendable stand of the three hundred. The account which follows will detail a portion of that preparation. Likewise, the three hundred successful “standers” and the 31,700 unsuccessful “would-be standers” met with several obstacles. These events which preceded the stand of Gideon and his three hundred have pointed and productive applications for our stand for right and truth today.

The Faithful Few Among Many Fickle, Fickler, and Ficklest In Israel Of Old

There is no middle ground between faithful and non-faithful. One is either faithful or he is not. If he is not faithful, then he is fickle. Whether fickle, fickler, or ficklest he is not faithful and therefore lost (I John 1:7). God has never and will never approve of any degree of fickleness (Matt. 25:21ff).

The Israel Of Gideon’s Day Were The Ficklest Of People. As events in the book of Judges preceding the report of Gideon show, Israel was only sporadic in her loyalty to Jehovah repeatedly forsaking the flawlessly faithful God who had brought the Israelite nation out of Egyptian bondage and who had given Jacob’s descendants the promised land (Judges 2:7,10-12,17,19; 3:6-8,12). The faithful and holy Jehovah was left with no alternative when His people stubbornly refused to obey Him rather than to correct them. This took the form of spoilers of various heathen nations (Judges 2:14; 3:8,12). Eventually, under the stress of intense

oppression God's people would cry for His help and He repeatedly responded with a deliverer, a judge (Judges 2:15-18; 3:9-15). The people's freedom would be restored under faithful leadership, but their loyalty would be short lived and again they would pursue the erring ways of their fathers (Judges 2:17-19). Amazing is the report of Israel's fickleness, despite God's faithfulness and amazing is God's faithfulness despite Israel's fickleness. Of course, the bases for amazement in each instance are at diametric extremes. Israel's behavior was amazing because of its astounding ingratitude and God's because of His love and longsuffering. The fickleness of Israel generated an odious cycle in Israel and among such a people were brought up Gideon and his men.

Israel's Oppression By Midianite Forces Was Due To Israel's Sins. Because of the evil done in Israel "the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years" (Judges 6:1). The swarm of the enemy into the land is described as "locusts for multitude; both they and their camels were without number: and they came into the land to destroy it" (v. 5, ASV). From the report given later the enemy army itself which Gideon met in battle consisted of 135,000 men (Judges 8:10). Wayward Israel was driven by the encroaching Midianites into hiding in "the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds" and both the crops which the Israelites had planted and the livestock which they had raised were taken by the invading hordes (vs. 2,4). Summing up Israel's plight, they were "greatly impoverished" so much so as to recognize their need for God and to cry to Him for help (v. 6).

After recording Israel's plea for help the inspired writer indicates that God sent an unnamed prophet to

remind Israel of some of His prominent past assistance; immediately following that note the record tells us that the Lord sent an angel to Gideon (vs. 8-11). Evidently the prophet's words were intended to prepare Gideon and others to better receive the angel and subsequent messages from God to Gideon regarding the battle with the Midianites. Surely it was the case then and now that faith comes by hearing the Word of God and that these people were desperately in need of faith (Rom. 10:17). Differing from our day, God, prior to the second century A.D., employed direct revelation and other miracles in addition to His recorded words; by miraculous means He revealed and confirmed His word producing by the end of the first century A.D. the all-sufficient, inerrant, and final revelation of God which we call the Bible (I Corinthians 13:8-10; Hebrews 2:1-4; II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:3).

The angel's visit to Gideon informs him that God is with him, but Gideon at this point is far from confident of that pronouncement. In his reply Gideon reveals his knowledge of God's hand in the Midianite oppression, but also discloses his mistaken notion of the Divine purpose in that oppression (vs. 11-12). Gideon obviously believes in God and in God's wondrous works of the past, but he fails to recognize God's just chastening of Israel and falsely concludes that the ever-faithful God has forsaken Israel.

The angel further informs Gideon that he is a “mighty man of valor,” one who will “save Israel from the hand of the Midianites...” (vs. 12-14). This is contrary to Gideon's humble assessment of himself as one whose “family is poor in Manasseh,” and who is “least” in his father's house (v. 15). Gideon requests a sign from his

heavenly visitor and receives his request in the form of fire out of a rock (vs. 17,21). After this the angel departs.

The same night the Lord enlists Gideon in His service ordering Gideon to throw down the altar of the false god Baal and to cut down the grove which is by the idol (v. 25). This Gideon obediently does. Because of the damage to the false god the men of the city are incited to murderous rage; they order Gideon's father, Joash, to produce Gideon that they may kill him (vs. 28-30). Joash demonstrates considerable bravery when he denies their request and mockingly replies of Baal, "if he be a god, let him plead for himself..." (v. 31). In view of this record it seems likely that Gideon's courage, like New Testament Timothy's faith, was a virtue planted and nurtured in his upbringing (II Tim. 1:5).

Gideon is specially empowered by the Spirit of the Lord and uses a trumpet and messengers to summon the men of several tribes (vs. 34-35). That the Spirit's operation was not an over-ruling of Gideon's freewill is implied by Gideon's continuing uncertainty regarding God's assurance to save Israel by his (Gideon's) hand. Gideon asks for another sign (vs. 36-37). Honoring this request, God causes a fleece of wool to become wet during the night, while all the earth beside it remains dry (vs. 36-38). Cautiously and reverently, Gideon asks for still another sign, this time that the fleece be dry and all the ground around be made wet; this God also grants (vs. 39-40). Gideon has progressed from considerable doubt about God's beneficence toward Israel to a man of growing faith in God, one almost ready to tackle the multitudinous Midianites as God's appointed general.

The "Faithful" Assemble For War And/Or Pruning. With 32,000 men assembled at mount Gilead

in preparation for war against the 135,000 man host of the Midianites to the north, Gideon is told by God, no doubt to his astonishment, “The people that are with thee are too many...” (Judges 7:1-3). God further explains that victory with such a force (even though it was less than 25% of the number of opposing soldiers) would cause some to wrongly conclude that the victory was man’s and not God’s (v. 2). This was not, however, the only reason for trimming the forces as is shown by subsequent details. Gideon is told by God to tell those who are “fearful and afraid” to depart; 22,000 do so. Notice that those departing are more than twice the number remaining—10,000. Notice that those leaving might have felt that they were saving face by claiming that they were simply doing what most everyone else was doing. Is this not what a lynch mob tells itself? Whatever their reason for failing to stay in the Lord’s faithful army, this is certain, they had what the faithless always have, plenty of company. Such will be zero consolation in hell.

The Lord, again, likely to Gideon’s surprise, says (of forces now amounting to less than 8% of those of the enemy), “The people are yet too many” (v. 4). God now instructs Gideon as to how to test the remaining 10,000 for their suitability for battle. The test involved the manner in which the men would drink water; those who would get down on their knees to drink were to be set apart from those who raised the water to their mouths by their hand and lapped from their hand (vs. 5-6). The cautious drinkers numbered 300 and the less-than-cautious 9,700 were sent home (v. 7). One should keep in mind that these 10,000 men have reported for war and are no doubt aware of the great threat posed by the

army of far greater numbers than their own which is within their own borders and possibly very near. All of the men should have been exceedingly alert for the possibility of an attack. For some reason 9,700 were not vigilant. Was it because they trusted God more than the 300 careful soldiers did? Was it because they were just reckless? Was it because they falsely supposed that God would give them the victory regardless of the intensity or appropriateness of their efforts in the war? In contrast with those wrongly lax, the 300 were probably no less thirsty, but realized that there were more important considerations than quenching thirst without regard for safety. May it have been that though they trusted in God to give them the victory over a force many times larger than their own, that they nevertheless were acting with the realization that God does not do for man what man can do for himself and so expects men to do their very best? More on the behavior of both groups is considered in later application of the lessons.

Following the test which eliminates another 9,700, Gideon has a very modest number of 300 soldiers to fight an army of 135,000, an outnumbering of 450 to 1. Perhaps due to the newly diminished numbers, Gideon is in need of further assurance that God has given him the victory. For whatever reason, it is obvious that Gideon needed yet another bolstering of his faith because God provides a fourth sign for Gideon. God is not stingy in providing evidence for those who really want to know what is and what is not the case regarding His will (I Thess. 5:21; John 7:17). God now tells Gideon to go down and listen to the Midianite soldiers on guard duty. This Gideon does and overhears a Midianite telling his dream. The Midianite says, “a cake of barley bread tumbled

into the host of Midian and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell and overturned it, that the tent lay along” (Judges 7:13). A fellow soldier interprets the dream to indicate that this is “...the sword of Gideon...” and that “...into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host” (v. 14). Gideon is now both grateful and confident. He worships God, returns to his 300 soldiers, and assures them that “...the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian” (v. 15).

The Faithful Implement The Plan; They Stand; They Win. The wise battle plan employs the advantages of a nighttime surprise attack. As noted in the beginning of this discussion, the soldiers have torches and trumpets which are suddenly and powerfully employed to waken and startle the sleepy and confused Midianite enemy (vs. 19-20). Gideon and his brave 300 were in their appointed places at the appointed time and were undeterred by fear of the far larger opposing force; they did what they came to do and they ***“stood every man in his place*** round about the camp...” (v. 21). The victory was won because God’s people, the 300 with their leader, Gideon, obeyed God. They won because of God and because they stood. The enormous host of the Midianites ran, and cried, and fled from a mere 300 men. These valiant and victorious men, were standing and not A.W.O.L. They were standing each in his own place, each man fulfilling his responsibility and not fighting with his fellow soldier over his place. They were standing where God and Gideon assigned them to stand and not where their opinions, feelings, or un-authoritative think-so’s dictated. Here is seen once more that God’s part is always done, whether helping those following His word to attain what is for their best or whether chastening

His own people or punishing unfaithful men. He never fails. Man's part, which always involves behaving in harmony with God's will, is rarely done; but, when it is done, it assures the victory as is shown here with the rout of the Midianites and their allies.

Lessons For Standing From Gideon And The Israelites

The standing done by Gideon's 300 was not the first step in their service to God. Gideon himself is proof that growth in faith precedes one's readiness for some of the more difficult stands that men are called to make for God. Man's prime obligation in life is to stand for God and for His truth, and to do all necessary to be ready to continue standing in future tests of faith which may arise and which may surpass in difficulty anything preceding. Gideon's story teaches us most helpful lessons to the end that we "stand every man in his place."

STAND — By Not Following The Fickle Among God's Own People. Gideon's 300 were not like the majority of fickle Israel. Perhaps the alliteration offered by one writer will help cement this invaluable thought in place—"Fickle folks fold fast, finally falling flat forever." The ficklest, with the first appealing offer swerve from the course of righteousness; the less fickle wait for a more enticing offer; the habit of the faithful is to refuse to budge from the strait and narrow path for anything. The ficklest, with the slightest indication of inconvenience, difficulty, or danger are gone with whatever appears to promise ease and safety; the less fickle do the same but their threshold of tolerance is a little higher; the faithful are determined to endure anything that may arise as required to walk in the steps

of their example and to thereby be pleasing to God (Luke 8:13-14; I Peter 2:20-21). Sharpening contrasting the fickle, fickler, or ficklest with the faithful, the apostle Paul says,

...be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things (Phil. 3:17-19, ASV).

Truly the fickle are fair-weather friends of God, that is, they only pretend to be with God and that pretense is part-time and tenuous. Be assured that God does not count on the fickle to serve Him and the fickle cannot count on God to save them (I Cor. 15:58; Heb. 5:8-9).

STAND — Be Honestly Maximizing Your Potential In God's Service. Gideon assessed himself as feeble saying, “My family is poor...I am the least in my father’s house,” but God called Gideon a “mighty man of valor,” and told him, “thou shalt save Israel” (Judges 6:12-15). Gideon’s potential was far greater than he thought at the outset of his story; is the same not true of us? Having as God’s faithful people do, “the power of God unto salvation,” the Word of truth, for our sword we can do tremendous good as soldiers fighting the good fight of faith (Rom. 1:16; Eph. 6:17; I Tim. 6:12; Matt. 5:16). Regardless of our natural talents or lack of talents, we can all be great in the kingdom, for as the Lord said, “whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister...” (Matt. 20:26). Who among us cannot minister or serve in some way (Matt. 10:42; Rom. 12:1ff)? Who cannot say words or write words of encouragement,

consolation, instruction, or correction to a brother or non-Christian in need of that very thing (Heb. 3:13; Gal. 6:1ff)? Who cannot study to better equip himself as a soldier of the cross (II Tim. 2:15)? Who cannot fervently pray for his brethren and for all men (I Tim. 2:1)? Yes, all of us can do something in the kingdom, and many, if not most of us, can do far more than we are doing. One of our own has said, "It is amazing how much good can be accomplished, if one does not care who gets the credit." Sadly, however, many are like the farmer who refused to subscribe to *Farmer's Magazine*. A young magazine salesman had tried a sales pitch on the farmer, assuring the farmer that the magazine would help him farm better. The farmer's honest but indolence-revealing response was, "Son, the magazine would do me no good, I already know how to farm better than I'm farming." Brethren, do we already know how to be better Christians than we are being? If so, it is no wonder why we do not study the Bible to keep ourselves ready for spiritual battle. We don't intend to use what we already know, so why learn more? Having such unused knowledge amounts to self-deception and our self-condemnation (James 1:22; Luke 12:47-48). Brethren, get busy using what you have got to use or you are not standing now and surely will not pass the test of standing in "the evil day" (Eph. 6:13). "We had better start giving to God (in prayer, study, good works, and every other right way) like He's been giving to us, before He starts giving to us like we've been giving to Him"¹ (Gal. 6:7-8).

STAND — By Recognizing And Appreciating The Need For Evidence, A Solid Foundation Upon Which To Build Our Faith. Indeed, a genuine, biblical,

saving faith can do wonderful things since it “...is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). However, the faith which saves our soul is nothing less than the belief which arises from reasoning correctly concerning the evidence (Rom. 1:20:10:17). We do not have that saving faith or availing belief unless we have carefully examined and reasoned correctly concerning the evidence necessary to support it (Isa. 1:18). Our belief that God will do as He has promised to do is not based upon the direct observation of miracles as was Gideon’s (in part), but rather upon the written word of inspired men who did miracles and who reported those miracles and other truths by the miracle of inspiration (John 20:30-31; II Tim. 3:16-17). Gideon, who lived under the law of Moses and no doubt derived much of his faith from what he had learned from that source as well as from the reports of his ancestors, also had four miraculous signs as evidence to support his belief that the messages he had received were from God and that the content of those messages was therefore true and should be followed with all diligence (Judges 6:13). Our “signs,” in contrast, are all in the Book! We have the whole, marvelous, miracle-filled, God-given greatest story ever told with abundant confirmation (Heb. 2:1-4). We have evidence in print—small, medium, large, and giant. We have it on audio cassette; we have it in computers which produce a desired passage before one’s eyes almost instantaneously at the touch of a button. We have it with helps too numerous to note here, but summing it up by large categories: we have it in concordances, in lexicons, in grammars, and in commentaries. Most of us even have available commentators to address and help with our

questions about the evidence. While caution is needed in gathering, examining, and reasoning with the evidence, the excuse of not having the evidence readily available is indeed a feeble excuse for twentieth century Americans.

If we do not obtain and process the evidence, we will not have the faith which works through love (Gal. 5:6). Therefore, we cannot and will not do the work God wants done or fight the battles God wants fought and consequently, we cannot stand upon the promises which obtain for God's workers and fighters. As God provided all the evidence that right-minded Gideon needed to muster the faith necessary for his great challenge, so He has provided in abundance the evidence we need for the faith we must have to be saved (James 2:14f). A universe full of facts, discernible through empirical means, provides irrefutable evidence of God's eternal existence, supernatural power and intelligence (Rom. 1:20). A Bible full of profound propositional truth, discernible through study and correct reasoning, provides irrefutable evidence of God's authorship. Knowing that the Book is from God, man's Creator, makes it imperative that man give the Bible his foremost attention and loyalty (John 20:30-31; 7:17).

STAND — By Being Like (In One Way) The 22,000 Who Went Home. The one way we should be like this fickle bunch is in showing up at the summons of the God-appointed leadership (Acts 20:28). Unlike a host of "Sunday-morning-worship-hour-only-members" who ignore the eldership's directions to attend several weekly meetings of the Lord's army, the 22,000 soldiers who later left in fear, responded to Gideon's calling them to an assembly. Mindful as they were of the potential

for deadly warfare and the danger to losing their lives, they at least showed up. Of course, we should not follow their negative example of fear and departure, nor should we copy them in their motive for showing up if their presence was due to the mere desire of being with the crowd or as a matter of curiosity. Our attendance should be motivated by a desire to comply with God’s will and for the joy and benefit of being able to be with and to help others who have as their utmost concern being with God now and in eternity (Heb. 10:24-25; 11:6). What a shame it is that one would be so fickle as to need the prodding provided by the very temporary presence of the fickle 22,000. What a shame that our “no-show” brethren are absent not because of fear for their lives, but because they are too comfortable in their recliners and too busy watching television or doing other mundane things. Brethren, if that which keeps you from services of the Lord’s church would not keep you from your job or your children from school, what is it that you really put first in your life (Matt. 6:33)? When you have answered that question you will see what a paltry price you are accepting in exchange for your soul (Matt. 10:37-39; 16:26).

STAND — By Being Like (In Some Ways) The 9,700 Who Kneled To Drink. Of the 10,000 remaining after the fearful and afraid 22,000 departed, 9,700 failed the drinking test God had Gideon employ. Though they failed, their behavior in some regards was commendable. They had shown up in the initial summons of Gideon and they had overcome the fearfulness that caused the 22,000 to go home. Though each of them stayed in the company of a sizable crowd at least their decision to do so was not based on just doing what the absolutely

largest number did (Exod. 23:2). In this regard they were unlike some brethren today who want a count of men's hands rather than a study of God's Word before making any major decision. These 9,700 careless water drinkers must have had some trust in God to stay put despite being so greatly outnumbered by the Midianites and being tempted by the departure of 22,000. However, we should not be like the 9,700 in their recklessness which was demonstrated by the manner in which they drank. As Christian soldiers we are to walk circumspectly, accurately, diligently, in harmony with Bible authority (Eph. 5:15; Col. 3:17; Matt. 4:4). We are to be sober and vigilant in view of the power, subtlety, and utter viciousness of our adversary (I Peter 5:8). Our soul's salvation depends upon our sustained awareness of the adversary who, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:7-8).

It is possible that the 9,700 were thinking that since God had now selected a new leader for His people that the victory was so insured as to preclude optimal diligence and care on the part of the soldiers. It is urgent that we not reason in this manner since this is nothing more than "faith only" or "grace only" doctrine somewhat disguised. "Yes," they may have told themselves, "We need to be in the army and we need to go to the battle, we just need not do our best as to alertness or we need not fight with all our might." Such thinking, whether the 9,700 had it or not, is thinking we should recognize as devil-devised and soul-damning to those succumbing to it. The Bible says,

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many,
I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall
not be able (Luke 13:24).

...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

The Christian soldier is always on duty and must ever be ready for combat with the devil’s power and far more numerous forces. Though our adversary flees when resisted, his retreat is strategic and he always returns for a re-engagement, and that on our blind side if possible (James 4:7; I Peter 5:8).

STAND — By Being Like (In Every Right Way) Gideon And The 300. Like the 300, we should: (1) go to the assembly of the army when summoned, (2) overcome fear and every other potential deterrent to duty such as inconvenience, expense, and ridicule; (3) proceed in caution always, doing all of our part in God’s plan for victory, and finally, (4) stand now and grow so as to stand in the hour of greatest opposition. Clearly, the standing required in the most challenging test presented in Gideon’s story, the ultimate standing done by Gideon and 300 faithful men against the 135,000 man army, was standing preceded by preparation, faith-building preparation. Undeniably the 300 had to take a stand, several stands, before their ultimate test of facing and defying the awesome forces of Midian, but the premier stand was nevertheless a stand essential to their salvation. Brethren, we cannot rightly be satisfied with having stood in some way at some time, reserving for ourselves an imagined right to now be “sitters” or “absentees” in obligatory matters. This is so, even if an obligatory matter is in our opinion a “minor matter.” If God made something obligatory, it is not minor. In the drinking conduct of the 300, certainly a small matter by the world’s thinking, they were careful because they had the same idea God had about the drinking, that is, it

was significant. Man's assessment is not the crucial matter in determining what is or is not a minor matter; man's obligation is to ascertain what God has declared as obligatory, optional, or prohibited (Col. 3:17). To include in the worship service things like the mechanical instrument of music, hand-clapping, choirs, and women leading men is wrongly seen by some as inconsequential (Col. 3:17; Eph. 5:19; I Tim. 2:9ff). Some with the wave of their hand wrongly accuse the faithful and careful students of Bible truth of "majoring in minors," when the "minors," as they term them, are matters which God has declared to be matters of the faith (Jude 3).

Those who have commendably fought in the hottest of spiritual battles in the past cannot point at past "standing" and justify sitting or silence when their voices and pens are still needed and they are still able to wield the sword, nor is it right for those who are vocally opposed to the ravages of liberalism to persist in fellowshipping churches which have demonstrated their intention to run with the liberal crowd full-tilt and full trottle (Eph. 5:11; II John 9-11). Those who have commendably resisted the pressures to go with liberal congregations cannot point at that past "standing" and justify their current spiritual inactivity or haphazard efforts to fight for right even though they are now members in a faithful congregation (Matt. 5:6; Gal. 6:9).

Those who have commendably taken a stand with the Lord by obeying the Gospel cannot point at that "standing" and justify their failure to study and grow so as to equip themselves for continuous standing and for future standing requiring greater spiritual strength than they now possess (I Peter 2:2; Heb. 5:12-14). Too long have such church members in perpetual spiritual infancy

failed to fit the description which admirably fit our predecessors, “Bible-toting and Bible-quoting people,” and too long have those members in abysmal ignorance of the Bible remained therein by relying on the pitifully weak defense, “my preacher knows.”

We must all stand now by doing the good we know and are able to do and by preparing through prayerful study and meditation on the truth to be able to stand in the future; we must all determine to ever stand for God and His saving truth in active opposition to Satan and his forces.

STAND — By Realizing That God’s Promise To Be With Man Is Unfailing But Conditional. Those with God undoubtedly will win every victory of eternal consequence, but not all who think they are with Him are with Him. In blunt language, thinking it so doesn’t make it so (I Cor. 10:12; II Cor. 13:5; I John 2:3). Gideon perhaps was not completely clear on this matter when the Lord’s angel first visited him, but assuredly knew this when he led his 300 valiant soldiers to war with Midian. Heaven, the supreme blessing of all those which the perfect Giver holds before us is the opportunity to be with Him permanently where He resides above all sin; it is “a prepared place for a prepared people,” as our faithful preaching brethren have often proclaimed. Heaven is an unfailing promise of God, but it is repeatedly declared to be a conditional promise of God (Matt. 7:21; 25:46; Heb. 5:8-9). Ours is the obligation of preparation; ours is the obligation of standing.

STAND — By Understanding That God’s Loyal People Standing United Always Win. Spiritual victories are not always so obvious as was Gideon’s, but God’s loyal people always win and such victories are the

most important kind.

In the current apostasy the future of many of God's children and many of His churches is bleak indeed (II Tim. 3:13; Heb. 3:13). Their digression into the darkness of error and sin is to their greatest possible loss, but it is loss rather than victory only because they have chosen not to stand with God. In spite of the sorrow associated with the destruction of these souls, God's faithful can be and should be optimistic about all of the faithful among God's children (Phil. 4:4; Matt. 5:12). Forgetting the assurance afforded the faithful can work to our undoing; we should ever remember that God's faithful people always win. They win with an obedient faith. They win by following God's plan. They win with far fewer forces than the enemy. They win though the worldly prediction is certain defeat. They win with every man standing in his place and they win forevermore (Rev. 17:13)!

Conclusion

Gideon and the 300 are of profound importance to us today because of their exemplary stand and because of the tremendous significance of the word "stand" as applied to Christianity. Viewed as an **obligation**, our stand with God is comprehensive of the whole of our life in submission to the whole of His Word (Col. 3:17; Matt. 4:4). Viewed as an on-going **description** of our life, our stand with God is our noblest and best attainment (II Tim. 4:7). Viewed as a **conclusion** of our life, our stand with God is our greatest commendation and reason for our welcome into eternal joy (II Tim. 4:8; Matt. 25:21,23). May God help us to stand with Him now, and having done all to stand (Eph. 6:13).

Chapter 13

The Work Is Urgent; Time Is Limited

Tom Holland



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Suppose a doctor told you that you had a pancreatic malignancy and that you had no more than three months to live. What would you do? Become so depressed that you become practically immobile? Would you want to take the dream vacation that you had never enjoyed?

Our existence on this earth is characterized by: brevity, trouble, a sure termination, and by opportunities.

Let us explore God's Word concerning the limited time we have on earth and then we will consider the work that God wants us to do while we are here.

The Brevity Of Time

Centuries ago when suffering Job, who for all he knew was facing an imminent death, watched the person who would run from village to village with the news, the "post" they called him, we call him the "postman" today; anyway, when Job observed the speed with which

the man ran with the news, Job said, “my life is like that,” it quickly passes. “Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good” (Job 9:25). He continued the description of the brevity of life by declaring that his days “are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle hasteth to the prey” (Job 9:26).

A little later Job observed,

Man that is born of a woman is of few days,
and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a
flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a
shadow, and continueth not (Job 14:1-2).

The Psalmist declared,

The days of our years are threescore years and
ten; and if by reason of strength they be
fourscore years, yet is their strength labour
and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly
away (Psm. 90:10).

This emphasis on the brevity of life is also found in New Testament Scripture. James wrote,

Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we
will go into such a city, and continue there a
year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas
ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For
what is your life? It is even a vapour, that
appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth
away (James 4:13-14).

Have you ever noticed on some late fall or winter morning the vapor that would be blanketing a meadow or field and in a relatively short time it was gone. That’s God’s picture of our life on earth. Very brief. Soon gone.

But think of the people who do the very thing James discussed. They plan for tomorrow as if they were guaranteed that tomorrow. Who, reading this, has any

way of knowing for sure what will be on the morrow.

Over 5,000 people in Kolbe, Japan lost their tomorrow in twelve seconds of earthquake!

There are people who awoke this morning who are now in eternity. Heart attacks. Automobile accidents. The surgery failed. Overdoses.

How many people sincerely plan to obey the commands of the gospel tomorrow or at a later date? How many people plan to be restored to the Lord and His church next Sunday, or at a later date? How many people plan to mend broken relationships tomorrow, or in the near future? How many people plan to talk to a friend or relative about his or her soul tomorrow, or when the time is convenient?

There just seems to be too many problems today. There are too many hindrances right now. How much we used to heed the admonitions of that old invitation song, “There’s danger and death in delay!”

It is so important for God’s people to apply the inspired admonitions to “redeem the time.” Hear the apostle Paul in a passage of Scripture in which he is explaining how God’s people are to be “followers [imitators] of God.” There were several negatives emphasized, such as: fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, and filthiness of speech (Eph. 5:3-4). Among the positives for God’s people is this:

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Eph. 5:15-16).

To “redeem the time” is to seize the opportunity. The golden now of life is the only sure time we have. The poet said, “Trust no future how ere present.”

The lesson of James needs to be learned by God’s

people. We must do God's work "while it is day" because "the night cometh when no man can work," our Lord declared (John 9:4). The lesson of James needs to be learned by those whose prejudice, ignorance, or indifference has hindered them from obeying the Lord.

Let us now look carefully at the lesson James teaches based on the uncertainty and brevity of life. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). In this inspired declaration James emphasized the two essentials of true Christianity, namely, **knowing** and **doing**. If one knows and does not do, it is sin. If one acts without knowledge, the response could be dangerous, it is certainly not an action properly guided of God.

Think of the necessity of knowledge. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The apostle Paul wrote that God will have all men to be saved and "to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4). The apostle Peter said that our souls are purified in our obedience to the truth (I Peter 1:22).

But consider the Biblical emphasis on doing or obedience. Jesus said that those who enter the kingdom are those who do the will of the heavenly Father (Matt. 7:21-22). Our Lord showed the inconsistency of calling Him Lord but refusing to do what He says (Luke 6:46). Peter said that one's soul is purified as that person obeys the truth (I Peter 1:22). The Scriptures declare that Jesus saves those who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9).

However, we are faced with an interesting dilemma: why would people know what God wants them to do and yet either refuse to do it, or neglect to respond?

Perhaps the answer is found in James chapter one

in the admonition: “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).

James illustrated the point with a mirror. A person looks in a mirror and sees attention that needs to be given to one’s personal appearance, but they *forget* what needs to be done. Why do they forget? Maybe they get so involved with other things such as business, a profession, sports, or some financial or family problem, that the impact of the word on their mind is dulled.

Look at a contrast:

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (James 1:25).

So the basic problem of a person knowing and not doing is one of failing to allow God’s Word to properly and effectively influence the life.

What Does God Expect Us To Do?

A study of God’s Word should impress us with God’s expectations of us and should also motivate us to be responsive to God’s will for our lives.

God expects us to grow and develop as Christians (I Peter 2:1-3). If there are old habits and attitudes that are yokes upon our spiritual necks then these must be “laid aside.”

The desire for God’s Word that will motivate one to personally study it and to cause one to take Bible classes and Biblical sermons seriously is vital to spiritual growth and survival.

The ideal of Christian growth is “perfection.” What does it mean to be perfect? What is the criterion for evaluation? There are at least five characteristics of

perfection revealed in the Scripture. One, the perfect person can eat the “meat” of God’s Word (Heb. 5:12-14). Two, the perfect person can discern both “good and evil” (Heb. 5:12-14). Three, the perfect person loves enemies (Matt. 5:43-48). Four, the perfect person controls the tongue (James 3:1-2). Five, one who is perfect realizes the need for further spiritual growth and development (Phil. 3:13-14).

One can become so concerned about the problems of others, the sins of the world, and the weaknesses of brethren that he forgets his need to strive to be perfect.

The Lord also expects us to teach others (Matt. 28:18-20). Please observe the Lord’s plan: the apostles were to teach and baptize, then teach those baptized to do what the Lord had told them to do, namely, teach and baptize.

The question is: are we doing what the Lord said do? If not, then the text from James looms up before us, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

There is an urgency about this challenge to teach. The longer one lives in sin the more difficult it will be for that person to be set free from the domination of sin over his or her life. Sin can sear the conscience (I Tim. 4:1-2), and harden the heart (Heb. 6:4-6).

Too, we need to accept the challenge to teach the lost because life on earth is both brief and fragile. Remember James’ explanation? Life is a vapor. You know not what shall be on the morrow.

God also expects us to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). In a day when some people seem to prefer entertainment instead of worship and when people want worship services to cater to their

wishes and whims, we need to remember that God is the object of our worship (John 4:24). We need to also remember that God has always told man how to worship and has always insisted that people worship as He directs.

The Lord also instructs His people to: “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts”(Titus 2:11). Peter used the word “abstain” relative to fleshly lusts (I Peter 2:11). While the world distorts the concept of “liberty” so it becomes a rationalization for doing whatever one desires to do, God urges people to be temperate, to practice self-control or self-discipline.

The word “discipline” emphasizes “a conscious divestment of all encumbrances, and then a determined investment of all of one’s energies...the disciplined Christian must divest himself of every association, habit, and tendency which impedes godliness...he must invest all his energy and sweat in the pursuit of godliness.”

The denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts must be balanced with the positive life of soberness, righteousness, and godliness (Titus 2:11-12).

One who lives soberly will not be “intoxicated” with pride, conceit, or self-deception. One who lives righteously will do right in relationship to others in the home, in the marketplace, in the school room, in the office, and in recreational pursuits. One who lives godly will demonstrate a love and respect for God.

The Lord also expects His people to stand for truth and right. The metaphor of the soldier is used several times in the New Testament to communicate the courage and dedication necessary in living for God. For example, Paul closed the profound Ephesian letter by urging God’s people to: be strong in the Lord...to stand

against the wiles of the devil...and having done all to stand” (Eph. 6:10-13).

God’s people are reminded that they are to depend on the Lord and the power of His might (Eph. 6:10). Those who rely on the Lord will “put on the whole armour of God” (Eph. 6:11). They will indeed “take unto you [themselves] the whole armour of God, that ye [they] may be able to withstand in the evil day” (Eph. 6:13).

Each part of the Christian’s armour is identified. One sees in this list: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the sword of the Spirit, God’s Word, and prayer (Eph. 6:14-18).

We have a cunning, subtle, intelligent adversary who uses “wiles,” schemes, tricks, and lies. He cleverly leads people to embrace immorality by offering them pleasure without revealing the tragic price for the pleasure: guilt, shame, fear, and death or separation from God (James 1:12-17; Rom. 6:23).

Satan seeks to corrupt God’s Word with false doctrine (II Cor. 11:14-15). Because of his efforts some people “depart from the faith” (I Tim. 4:1-3). Some “deny the faith” (I Tim. 5:8). Some people have a faith that is overthrown by false doctrine (II Tim. 2:15-19).

God calls upon His people to stand for truth and righteousness. The importance of being loyal to God and His Word is evident to informed people. The Lord’s church is presently facing one of her greatest challenges. There are those who want us to deny our identity as the true church. There are those who want us to compromise with denominationalism. “Soldiers of Christ, arise and put your armour on!”

Finally, God calls upon us to be patient or steadfast (I Cor. 15:58). The time to develop this noble

quality of character is now!

We are to be faithful to God unto the end of life. The apostle Paul could say,

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (II Tim. 4:7-8).

The Christian race is to be run with patience or endurance (Heb. 12:1-2).

Conclusion

Life on earth is both brief and uncertain. If we ever expect to give our hearts and lives to God we must do it now. “Today is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2).

A world that is on fire with sin needs to be rescued. God’s people must take seriously the challenge as well as the opportunity to “rescue the perishing.”

God’s people need to dedicate themselves anew to letting their lights shine so men engulfed in the darkness of sin and religious error may **see** the demonstration of devotion to God, the life of service for the Lord, and the courage of Christian soldiers unafraid and unashamed of their Lord and His cause.

In a day when evil casts a long shadow over the earth, the Son of Righteousness needs to shine forth in a faithful proclamation and zealous demonstration of His Word of truth.

God expects His people to grow and mature spiritually, to teach others, to worship regularly, sincerely, and faithfully, to reject the lusts of the world,

and to stand as true soldiers in the army of the Lord.

The time for obedience is now! The time for renewed dedication is now!

“Today, we need a new articulation of Christian ‘vows.’ Such vows will constitute a new call to obedience to Christ in the midst of contemporary society. The need is great. The task is urgent. Our century longs for a new demonstration of joyful, confident, obedient living. May we be such a demonstration.”

There is an urgency about the Lord’s work. There is an urgency about the need for all of God’s people to renew their devotion to the Lord and His church. Now is the time. Today is the day!

The Truth About Tomorrow

The siren goddess of tomorrow

So confident, sometimes cocky, always sure;
Beguiles unsuspecting souls with baseless promise,
As if life on this earth could be secure.

But wisdom has noble truth about tomorrow:

“Thou knowest not what the future here will be.”
So seize today and give your life a full measure,
Because tomorrow may usher in eternity.

– Tom Holland

Endnotes

1 R. Kent Hughes, **Disciplines of a Godly Man**, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991), p. 205.

2 Richard Foster, **Money, Sex, and Power**, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 15.

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Fifth Annual

TRUTH IN LOVE LECTURESHIP



Theme:
*“Soldiers Of Christ,
Arise”*

Section III:
**The Enemy
And His Servants**

Chapter 14

Identifying The Enemy

Harrell Davidson



Harrell has been preaching the gospel for forty years, full-time since 1958 ~ His formal education was received at Freed-Hardeman, Harding Graduate, and Alabama School of Religion ~ He is an Honorary Alumnus of Memphis School of Preaching ~ He presently preaches for the church in Obion, Tennessee (for fourteen years) ~ Harrell and Carrie have four children and one grandchild.

To the church in Ephesus the apostle Paul wrote,
Put on the whole armour of God, that ye
may be able to stand against the wiles of the
devil (Eph. 6:11).

“Wiles” is described as cunning devices. It denotes deceit and craft. The central idea is that one looks forward, deliberately and with forethought, to carrying people away by every wind of doctrine (cf. Eph. 4:14). Note in Ephesians 4:14 that Paul spoke of “sleight.” This is that weapon which is used by false teachers. Look further and observe that Paul used the words “cunning craftiness.” Last, he shows what the enemies of the church and the cross will do—“whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Inspiration furnishes us with positive proof on what the wiles of the devil are all about.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts
of your father ye will do. He was a murderer
from the beginning, and abode not in the truth,

because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

So the biggest liar of all ages is a cunning, crafty, devising, scheming individual. He is the devil. This, my brethren, is our enemy.

The devil uses many devices. He uses many people. There is no partiality when it comes to those whom he will use to accomplish his purpose. He uses the laws of the land to his advantage. He uses the Bible and the church to his advantage, though he is a hater of Christ and the church. He seeks to place a question in one's mind that would cause one to stop and ask if God really means what He says. Isn't this the very way in which he tempted Eve in the garden temptation? The devil said, “Yes, hath God said...?” (Gen. 3:1). If he can get us to question what God has said in any way, he has the battle won. When we get to the point at which we cannot or will not accept God and His Word, then we are in the devil's camp and there we will stay, both now and eternally. There are a number of areas where we need to look in order to see the devil at work and know how to shut him down.

He uses so-called “scholarship.” Now, do not decide that I said I do not believe in scholarship. I do. However, there are those today who claim a higher degree of learning than any other and they cry “academic freedom.” By that, they mean they have the academic right to teach anything they want without anyone's mounting an objection to their false doctrine. The false teaching being done on the campus of Abilene Christian University has been well chronicled in the **Firm Foundation** in the past couple of years. The professors

who are guilty of teaching error do not want to be approached. They will not debate the issues which they feel so strongly about teaching in the classroom; they are unwilling to defend them on the polemic platform. There is a word for this, and it is “cowardice.” What true man of God will not stand in the highest court of the land to defend what the Bible says until his tongue and pen are laid silent by the dissenters or until breath leaves his body?

To a large degree, Christian education is leading the charge of taking the Lord’s church down the road to apostasy. This is not an indictment against all, but most. There is hardly a campus where false doctrine is not taught. There is hardly a campus where false teachers are not vilified. The apostate Shelly has his followers every year at Freed-Hardeman University. This does not mean the institution condones such action, but it is there nonetheless.

Shelly, Cope, Walling, and Lucado all have their followings. They are only representative of many. Scores are being led astray by these servants of the devil’s doctrine. They want change, change, change. They want to change the worship of the Lord’s church. They seek quartets, solos, and choirs to do the singing. That is what they say in the literature they write. What they really want is a concert. This will be discussed more later, however, to mention it here is a must. They want to be entertained. They want to walk into the building and say, “Here I am, preacher, entertain me and do it in about twenty minutes or less.”

One such preacher in America’s heartland said he had learned how to make his sermons eighteen minutes long. Are you interested in the same idea? Here was his

idea. Said he, “I can make my sermons about eighteen minutes long by leaving out scripture.” He proposed to use only a passage or two. He said he would tell a few funny stories to keep the audience and then end his sermon with an emotional appeal. By doing this, he could cut his sermons down to eighteen minutes. Look at the first thing left out—Scriptures! If this is scholarship, then we must have no part of it.

In some of our liberal institutions, we have men who question the validity of Mark 16:9-20. They demand that it is not in some ancient manuscripts. Individuals who write for liberal papers raise the question also. In the **Restoration Review** (Vol. 36/No. 1, First Quarter 1994, ISSN 0486-5642), Stanley N. Helton wrote a piece entitled “Churches of Christ and Mark 16:9-20.” After reading the piece about ten times, I came to the conclusion that Helton took no stand himself. He did take a stand for a dead man who he *thinks* changed his mind on Mark 16:9-20. He was talking about brother J. W. McGarvey. Helton’s last sentence in the article becomes the bearer of his bad news. He says, “Here the concern has been to *suggest* routes of inquiry opened *if* McGarvey’s revised conclusion is heard.” (emp. by HDD). The little word “if” is a big word. Notice how important a little one-syllable word can be.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed (John 8:31).

“IF ye continue in my word.” Helton says “if.” Helton gives himself away when he quotes from Westcott and Hort. That text is a corrupted one and is far inferior to the Majority or Received Text, also known as the Textus Receptus.

Helton raises my dander when he takes a swipe at my dear departed brother Guy N. Woods. He criticizes brother Woods for misspelling Hippolytus. Brother Woods spelled it with “Hi...” instead of “Hy...” McGarvey did the very same thing, but Helton had nothing to say about McGarvey’s doing so. Why do you suppose he would overlook such a glaring error? Obviously, he thinks he has McGarvey in his corner, but not brother Woods. He takes another swipe at brother Woods with his late stand for the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20. Brother Woods said,

The best and most conservative scholars through the ages have accepted the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20. Infidels, despisers of truth, and rationalistic scholars reject it. Each must decide into which camp his views lead.

I’ll take my stand with the mighty Woods and his scholarship rather than the man who accuses brother Woods of having a lack of “critical acumen.” I may lack it also, but I have never been afraid to defend Mark 16:9-20 anytime or anywhere in nearly forty years of preaching the gospel. Yes, I know the arguments that are presented. Some say it is spurious, meaning that it was not there to begin with. Others take the position that Mark didn’t write it, but a contemporary wrote it instead. I deny the first and don’t care about the second. Nehemiah did not write all of the book that bears his name. Neither did Solomon write every word in Proverbs. David did not write all the Psalms. Are we to conclude that these books just are not meaningful and need not be in the canon of the Scriptures? That makes about as much sense as throwing a rock to the moon.

What Helton has done is what the devil did in

Eden. He left a question mark. Said he, “We must wait.” Wait for what? Judgment when God might ask McGarvey to explain to Helton what he believed? Is there going to be a reincarnation and that way we will be able to get a latter-day revelation of what McGarvey believed? Nonsense! He slapped the truth and my friend who believed that truth and that will not wash with me. These types of folks are enemies of the Lord’s church. Another of the same persuasion has been a Bible professor at one of the Christian universities for many years. How many young people will these lead down the road to spiritual ruin?

Such teachers need marking as enemies of the cross of Christ. Christian colleges that tolerate error ought to be forced out of business. The Boards of Directors ought to be sued if they are not going by the charters, because not going by them is a grave error. All Trustees should be removed and replaced by those who will follow the Charters. Presidents who try to change policy ought to be removed immediately. We are the supporters of Christian education. The Trustees do not own the schools and neither do the presidents. The contributors own it and have given such funds in trust to the Trustees. We must stop the wholesale apostasy that is taking place in our Christian universities.

The Change Agents

We have already identified some of the change agents within the rank and file of the Lord’s church. They were named as only being representative of a much larger group. I would recommend that each person get a copy of brother William Woodson’s book on the change agents and the tactics they use. His is an excellent work

and I commend him for the contribution he has made to the cause of truth by his efforts.

I have before me a book entitled **Navigating the Winds of Change** by Lynn Anderson. Anderson should be considered an expert in changing the Lord's church. Understand that he is one of many, but all of them use the same basic and fundamental approach. They use the sensational and emotional abilities they have to convince large audiences of readers and hearers. Anderson speaks in his book of teaching a class of young people. He tells them and us about being called into a conference in order that "Global Action" may be taken. The World Mission Conference was headed by Billy Graham and John Stott in Lausanne, Switzerland. This was way back in 1974. 1974! By that time, some of us were already warning through writings and lectures the direction in which the Lord's church was headed. Some obviously thought there was no harm in having fellowship with denominational preachers to discuss how to evangelize. Shelly and his associates make no bones about going to a First Christian Church or a Methodist Church and teaching them how to grow. Anderson would not think twice about participating in such an activity.

This is the same Anderson who helped in leading astray Highland Avenue in Abilene, Texas. He did not start the apostasy but contributed to it and did nothing to stop it when he came on the scene. This is the same Anderson who partook of the Lord's Supper on Thursday evening on a hilltop overlooking Abilene during a marriage ceremony that he was saying for a young couple. He scoffed that such would be wrong, contending that it was participated in as an emblem of their wedding vows and the permanency of marriage. Marriage is

permanent and the vows are to be kept, but the Lord’s Supper is limited to the Lord’s Day, the first day of every week, and on no other day do we have Bible authority to partake. The Supper is emblematic, but not emblematic of marriage vows. This was years ago, but some of us were already pointing out exactly what was taking place in the church.

So it was, it is, and it will continue to be as long as the changers of God’s Will are allowed to run free and teach the error of Satan. They are of Satan. He is the enemy that we have and he is using these men to get the church split so he can try to destroy the influence of Christ. He will succeed in some quarters; in others he will fail.

Anderson called these people assembled in Switzerland “Christian leaders.” Are Graham and others of that stripe Christians? Are denominations in general Christians? Not according to the Scriptures. Well, the Scriptures do not really matter anymore to them. Anderson thought not twice about attending nor had any remorse about going, for fifteen years later there was another such conference in downtown Manila at the Convention Center where Tom Wang made opening statements. He showed a video that was filmed in 1986 on the Mount of Olives. There the film showed Wang handing torches to runners who set out to run to Jerusalem, through Judea and Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth to converge on the conference in Manila. As the video ended, the doors of the Convention Center swung open and down the aisles streamed the young runners carrying flaming torches. Following the torches were various costumed people representing the national dress or undress (his words, not mine...HDD)

of the 190 nations present at Manila.

Anderson gave a report on his travels with his wife Carolyn. He said that strong winds were blowing. Well, I have also visited some of the same countries to which Anderson went and the wind was blowing, but it said nothing to me except that it was hot and the winds parched my skin. I saw no Christian celebration like what he saw. He said he stepped “down from the platform after reporting the global excitement I’d seen in world missions, and this stuffy-looking ‘Brother Negative’ collared me.” I was not the stuffy negative brother but would have tried to correct him for being at such a place and under such conditions having part with Graham and others of like stripe. Anderson had no regard for the Scriptures and still does not. He shows that the way for this to happen in North America is by church plantings. He sees a few older congregations that are growing but very few in number. He avers that church plantings are what the New Testament is all about. What kind of church plantings are we talking about?

There is nothing wrong with starting a congregation if no faithful congregation is there, but that is not what he is talking about. Some want to play where they can teach what they want taught in the way they want it taught. They teach all about Brother Negative who wants to hold on to the pattern. We are not fooled by their actions. The devil is at work through such activity. Anderson goes on to show that unless the small rural churches change, they will die. This is a false notion. Can not the change agents understand that a big church, in numbers, may be as dead as is possible? Large congregations mean little except in the way the world

measures things. The small rural congregations were the backbone of the Herald of Truth when it was in its prime. It was not the large congregations that were giving the most, but the rural ones. The late brother W. F. Cawyer and the late brother E. R. Harper sat in my home and told me this was the case. Brother Woods in the Open Forum often spoke of the small rural congregations that carried the brunt of the load of mission work and support of such cooperative programs. Anderson wants the trend of church plantings to flourish and overcome the small congregations. This is the wrong motive! This is the wrong reasoning! This is the wrong spirit! This is the wrong everything.

Folks nowadays have cute slogans that capture the minds of the people and they think, “Well, it must be so.” For years, the constant barrage has come. Now, in 1995, we are told that what worked in 1955 will not work in 1995. So what do we need? Not a new gospel, they argue halfheartedly, but different methods. This is another tool of the devil. It leads to a worldly church.

The World In The Church

Man is geared today to the sensational. What is it that will excite the people? Now hear it! A congregation starts to build a building that looks suspect by its very dimensions. The elders are asked what is the planned use of the building? “Well, part of it will be an office complex.” Surely that is needed. “It will give us additional classroom space.” Of course, this is sometimes needed. “It will afford us a place where all the congregation can sit down and have a meal together.” Yes, that is worthy. Is it going to have a gymnasium floor and basketball goals at each end of the floor? “Yes,

it is, but understand that it is not a gymnasium.” A gymnasium by any other name is still a gym. You can call adultery anything else you want with the new hermeneutic, but that doesn’t make it so. Not only is this happening, but with great rapidity. We see numbers dwindling and we think this “band-aid” will stop the departures and increase the numbers. Do what, you say? Increase the numbers.

We are more number conscience than ever before. I was in a gospel meeting in another state when I asked the preacher how things were going. He said, “As long as we have 200 present and meet the budget, everything is all right. However, let the number fall or the contribution fall a little and the elders begin to get edgy.” What are we majoring in anyway? Minors, my dear friends. Have we become so far removed from the truth that we do not know that gyms and the such like have no power to convert souls? The gospel is God’s power to salvation and has been since the first Pentecost following the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. “When the roll is called up yonder,” the old Jerusalem gospel will still be God’s power to save. But, says one preacher, “I wish I never had to preach on the five steps ever again.” So help me, I told him that he should be ashamed and that if I could not preach again on the five steps to get into Christ, I would quit preaching. I am still preaching the same thing after nearly forty years, and he is a change agent. The world is in the church and we are measuring things by the wrong yardstick.

I promised more on the entertainment that we are evidently craving. We are geared to concerts and quartets to the point that it is hard to tell us from denominations. Lately, while going to preach in a gospel meeting in our

general area of West Tennessee, I had the radio on and was looking for some gospel preaching. I found a station that was making religious announcements. The Baptist church at a certain place was having the “Feel Good” (any name will do) quartet and they would perform there that Sunday afternoon at 2:30. A Methodist church nearby was also having a special afternoon with several quartets performing at 2:30 in the afternoon. On and on this went for about five minutes and then I was astonished. The announcer told of a church of Christ that was having a concert and concessions would be available. I thought, “What is the difference in the Lord’s church in that particular location and all the denominational churches that were mentioned?” To the average person, there is not one bit of difference. We have become strange bedfellows in that we have become like them. They have been that way for years, but we have just now decided that we can have this singing group come and put on a concert and perform for us. So, too, do we have actors, playing out roles. We have puppets that tell a gospel story and many other such trappings. What is the difference? Again, we have changed until we are one with them and we see no harm in such activity. Where is Bible authority for such? One preacher of the Gospel told me, “Brother Davidson, people don’t ask that question anymore.” We have in the past and we still do for the Scriptures tell us to do everything in the name of the Lord (Col. 3:17). Worldliness has infiltrated the Lord’s church in proportions that are staggering. This, too, is the devil’s tool.

Bible Ignorance

There appears to be more ignorance of the

Scriptures today than at anytime I personally can remember. Regardless of the reasons for this, it is there sitting in the pew ready to accept anything and everything that spews from the mouth.

Perhaps one of the most prominent men in religious thought was John Calvin, born in France in 1509. His doctrine above all others has infiltrated the Lord's church in place after place. I have taught against the five-plank platform of Calvinism for most of my years of preaching. Some brethren did not believe that such was coming into the church. When they saw the charismatic movement have its impact on us, they began to see the light. We had to fight that movement for years and we still have to fight it regarding the truth on the Holy Spirit. There are legions who believe in the direct operation theory of the Holy Spirit that came as a result of Calvinism.

Of late, however, we have had another problem. That is the false teaching concerning grace. Their umbrella theory passed around a while fostered in some preacher training schools. Then from Woodmont Hills in Nashville, Tennessee, the apostate Shelly proclaimed that man does not add one "whit" to his soul's salvation. He was talking about grace. This finally filters down to being saved by grace alone. If man adds not one whit, then it all must be God's part. Shelly would try to explain that this is not really what he means. It bothers me that a man with a Ph.D. degree cannot write or speak so as to be understood. We who are the uneducated always misunderstand; it is never the other way around. Simple study of God's truths will show that by His grace and man's faith one is saved (Eph. 2:8-9). One would know that God's grace appears teaching (Titus 2:11-12).

One with any knowledge of the Old Testament would see that God had a plan for delivering Israel from bondage. He made it possible, but man had to get up and go. This kind of lesson is repeated throughout the entire Bible.

The devil is at work in Nashville. Shelly got Lipscomb University officials to let the congregation where he works teaching false doctrine meet on the campus at Lipscomb. This was finally stopped because of the detrimental influence it was having on the university. Brother Willard Collins, former president of Lipscomb, made a statement in Georgia that is worth duplicating here in order to show that people are about fed up with claptrap things like those of Shelly and Woodmont Hills. Brother Collins said,

I had to make a choice, this of June, July. Oh, we have a situation in Nashville that's hurting us in regard to preaching the Word. We're polarized in Nashville about several things. We have Jubilee, one of them being polarized around Nashville. I've known Rubel Shelly so long. I always knew him as one of the most powerful preachers of the word. I worked with him at Getwell and Dunn in Memphis. I've been in the home of his mother...Franklin Camp told me when Rubel moved to Nashville, "If you can get him to teach at David Lipscomb, it will help." Years ago I hired him. I had Tom Holland, William Woodson, Rubel, other great men on the faculty, we hired these three. It didn't work out. I could cry, literally. I've prayed, I've shed tears. Jubilee has become an influential organ; it has become an influential thing in Nashville that is telling that the church of Christ as we know it was born in the Restoration in the

19th Century, not on Pentecost A.D. 30. Before Jubilee this year, the congregation where Rubel preaches joined with six protestant churches to have a post-Easter service. Everything was accepted, nobody said much against it, as far as I know nothing against it. Rubel preached on the resurrection.

“Wineskins,” the magazine, has in its foreword the church of Christ was born in the Restoration. I couldn’t participate this year. I’ve been preaching 59 years that the church that we’re trying to restore is not a denomination, that it is not the Catholic church, that we’re seeking to restore the original church, which goes through the restoration, all the way back to Jerusalem and Pentecost, that is the church of Christ...

I have several friends who are going in this movement. I regret it; I’m trying to do all that I can to help them. I’m trying to do all that I can to bring them back to the Lord and the church, and all of us need to. We want to be united, and the only way that I know to unite, the only common denominator, is to leave creeds and come back to the Bible. Don’t leave the Bible and go to creeds, of all things...

I had to make my decision. I’m not going to go.

I spoke with Shelly at the annual Gus Nichols lectures in Jasper, Alabama, a number of times. He was faithful at that time. He has left us and is now an apostate. He must come back; we must not go to him and his doctrine.

The study of the Word of God will stop such from happening. Stop studying the Bible and the church will be filled with error. We’re heading in the wrong direction in our education processes. We are using tainted Bibles

such as the NIV, the New Easy to Read Version, and others. The World Translating Institute in Texas is a liberal institution and they care not for the souls of men. They care about making money. To the making of books there is no end, but there will never be a book that will replace the true Word of God. Some argue that we only have it in translation form and that it is not therefore inspired since there are no inspired translations. Are you ready to accept the conclusion? What kind of Bible do you have that is not in translation form? Not one! Then is the Bible inspired? Of course it is, and we have reliable translations such as the King James and the American Standard Version of 1901 that are true to the original texts. To say that we have no inspired Bibles is an indictment against God. Did He give us a book that we could never have in pure form? Such is foolishness. If we will read and study the Word of God and accept by faith the things that we will learn, all of us will become defenders of the faith. It is a sin to be silent with the truth burning in our hearts. Or has the flame flickered and gone out?

On the positive side of things presently, I believe progress has been made in the right direction. Several congregations in the Nashville area have withdrawn fellowship from Woodmont Hills and Shelly. Others in East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia have also. Now if brethren would boycott Jubilee and the Tulsa Workshop, we could finally make a big enough dent that there would be a resurgence toward what the Bible says. Until we have a “thus saith the Lord,” we labor in vain. The devil is the enemy and he is working in all these areas and more. May God help us to have the vision to fight the good fight of faith.

Chapter 15

Satan's Servants, Our Enemies

B. J. Clarke



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The enemy is the devil (Matt. 13:39). Make no mistake about it. Christian enemy number one is the devil, Satan himself. But he is not our only enemy. As the title of this chapter suggests, the servants of Satan are also our enemies and must be regarded as such. God's people have always been surrounded, yes, outnumbered by the servants of Satan. It is no different today.

But the question arises, "Who are the servants of Satan?" Surely, the most prominent servants of Satan are the demon angels. Much is reported about the dastardly work of these demons, especially in the first five books of the New Testament. But are they a threat to us today? While it is impossible to take demons totally out of the picture as Satan's servants today, one thing is certain: these demons are not possessing people's bodies today as they were permitted to do in the first century era. But someone may say, "How do you know

demon possession does not occur today?” In short, such does not occur today because the age of the miraculous is past (I Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:8-13). Miraculous power was necessary to cast demons out of people in the first century. If demon possession were to occur today, then we would be without any means to eliminate its influence, thus tipping the scales decisively in Satan’s favor. Certainly, God would not leave us in such a hopeless and helpless condition. Evidently, God permitted demons to “have their day” during the earthly ministry of Christ to demonstrate the dominion of Christ over the power of the devil. It is interesting to note that the book of Acts has little discussion of demonic activity and none after Acts 16. The point of all that is to say that demons are not the servants of Satan that we are most concerned with combatting today.

However, this is not to suggest that Satan is powerless today to accomplish his diabolical purposes. As a roaring lion, he still walks about seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8). He has many servants at his command to do his bidding. We emphasize that these servants are at his command because they choose to be and not because they are forced to be. But how does Satan abide in humanity today? A clue is found in the statement of our Lord in John 14:23,

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

The point of the passage is that Jesus and the Father abide only where they have been invited to abide. Jesus knocks at the door of our heart, but we must exercise our free moral choice to open the door (Rev. 3:20).

Similarly, Satan knocks at the door of our heart through various avenues of temptation but we are not obligated to let him in. He cannot force his will upon us.

While it is true that Satan cannot impinge his will upon humanity, he does not lack for servants to follow him. Jesus said, “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34). Speaking to the same crowd, Jesus declared, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (John 8:44). All that Satan must do to recruit servants is to make men fall in love with sin and unrighteousness. Some might think of Satan’s servants as being only those involved in Satanic cults and ritualism. Paul’s definition is far more encompassing.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (Rom. 6:16).

Concisely stated, if you yield your will to follow after sin, then you are a servant of Satan. “He that committeth sin is of the devil” (I John 3:8). One does not have to drink blood or offer a gory sacrifice to be considered a servant of Satan.

Perhaps the most alarming observation of this whole lesson is that the servants of Satan are not just found in the secular realm. Tragically, even some who are supposedly “spiritual,” must be categorized as the servants of Satan. Thus, the servants of Satan are not merely the carnal minded men and women of the community. Some are serving Satan and don’t even know it. Some of Satan’s servants go to church every Sunday. Yes, some of them preach every Sunday! These words

may seem harsh and preposterous, but the proof is forthcoming.

Satan’s Secular Servants

Webster defines the word “secular” as “relating to the worldly or temporal.” Thus, secularism is “indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations.” If only Satan can keep our minds focused on the temporal he has got us! If he can rivet our attention to the satisfaction of fleshly lusts, then we are in his clutches.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:5-8).

The devil seeks to keep us from seeking those things that are above where Christ is (Col. 3:1). He wants to divert our attention away from laying up treasures in heaven to amassing worldly wealth instead (Matt. 6:19-21).

We are behooved to ask the question: “How does Satan use his servants to attempt to keep our minds on the secular?” We cannot afford to be ignorant of his devices (II Cor. 2:11). Many methods could be mentioned. Certainly, modern media has become one of Satan’s greatest servants in accomplishing his goal of keeping our minds on secular matters. Through modern television programming, Satan’s henchmen (TV producers,

scriptwriters, etc.) constantly assault and bombard the very foundations of our faith. Modern songwriters promote the autonomy of man in lyrics that Satan himself could have written. A popular singing group known as Salt N' Pepa has a song entitled, "None of Your Business." The song contains the following lyrics:

If I wanna take a guy home with me tonight,
it's none of your business; if she wanna be a
freak and sell it on the weekend, it's none of
your business.

This author knows of more than one "Christian" mother who has purchased the compact disc containing this song as a present for a teenage daughter. Books like "Heather Has Two Mommies" target children to accept the homosexual agenda. The book seeks to explain that a little girl named Heather has a family just like other kids do, she just has two mommies. In reality, Heather has two lesbians for parents. The book goes on to "explain" to its young audience that Heather's family is not freakish or deserving of censure. Indeed, the servants of Satan are alive and well on planet earth!

To be more precise, what is the methodology of Satan's servants? In answer to this question, we affirm that Satan's secular servants:

1. **Seduce** – Satan's servants seduce us to abandon our moral values and "go for the gusto." Here again, the media is one of Satan's major servants in the accomplishment of this task. The airwaves are full of "electronic visions of a world so violent, sensual and narcotic that childhood itself appears to be under siege" (**U. S. News and World Report**). Analyst and columnist Michael Novak wrote, "Our own public moral culture formed preeminently by television, cinema and music is

a disgrace to the human race.” Even the **Ladies Home Journal** published an article entitled “Living In Truly Tasteless Times” in which the author asserted,

...the American people appear to be unshockable now, desensitized even to genuine brutality—not to mention simple civility—and possessed of an insatiable appetite for whatever might once have been thought unsavory, crude, crass and even decadent...our popular culture is becoming flashier, trashier, more vulgar and exploitive.

And How Did This Happen? How did television get from where it was in the 1950’s to where it is in the 1990’s? The answer is quite simple. Slowly, but surely, Satan’s servants in the media have pecked away and chipped away at our sensitivities, steadily seducing us into the surrender of our moral convictions until we have practically lost our ability to blush (cf. Jer. 6:15). Like the frog in the kettle, we have been imperceptibly boiled, hard-boiled towards sin, one degree at a time.

For example, contrast the attitude towards homosexuality today with that of a few years ago. There is unquestionably more tolerance towards homosexuality today than in the past. And why? Again, it is because Satan has utilized his servants in the media to “soften” our moral objections. In 1991, the television program, “L.A. Law” introduced its audience to the bisexual character C. J. Lamb. Amanda Donohoe, who played C. J. said,

C. J. is as close as you can get to my personality in a fictional role. What I’ve decided to bring to C. J. are my sensibilities, my political views, and my morals.

What are Donohoe's "morals"? She once starred in "Lair of the White Worm" in which her character spits on a crucifix. Commenting on this scene in the film, she said, "I'm an atheist, so it was actually a joy. Spitting on Christ was a great deal of fun—especially for me being a woman...I can't embrace a male god who has persecuted female sexuality throughout the ages." This servant of Satan was shown kissing another woman on the mouth during the February 7th, 1991 episode of L. A. Law. It is just one more example of the devil attempting to depict as normal that which God has decreed abnormal.

2. **Scoff.** Satan's secular servants not only seduce, they scoff. They show contempt for things spiritual by their derisive acts and language. They mock and jeer at the very idea of a Supreme Being. They scorn the teachings of the Bible and blatantly deny its God-given authority. Who are these servants? Some are "scientists" whose much learning has made them mad. They consider themselves to be too intellectual for the "backwoods" teachings of the Bible. They are so obsessed with their "knowledge" that they ignore the real source of knowledge. Some are college professors who teach the theory of evolution and deny the existence of God. Some are politicians who enact legislation contradictory to divine legislation already given. Some are feminists who ridicule the Biblical model for the home and cry long and loud about their rights to their body. Some are philosophers who teach situation ethics and scoff at the idea of an absolute standard of morality.

The existence of such scoffers is nothing new to humanity. The Bible is replete with instances of man scoffing at his Creator's will. In fact, Job, in describing the attitude of the wicked, said,

Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us;
for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.
What is the Almighty that we should serve
him? and what profit should we have, if we
pray unto him?

These words sound hauntingly descriptive of the attitudes manifested by many in our secular world today. On another occasion, after God had sent His messengers to warn His sinful people because He had compassion on them, it is said that the people “mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy” (II Chron. 36:16). In the book of Proverbs, wisdom is personified and depicted as calling out to the foolish. In fact, the text says,

I called, and ye refused; I have stretched out
my hand and no man regarded; But ye have
set at naught my counsel, and would none of
my reproof...for that they hated knowledge, and
did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would
none of my counsel; they despised all my
reproof (Prov. 1:24,25,29,30).

Later, in the same book, it is said, “Fools make a mock at sin” (Prov. 14:9).

The scoffing, sneering, jeering, attitude of Satan’s servants delineated in the aforementioned passages is unfortunately still with us in this present age. Satan’s servants still scoff at the truth. One vivid example of such scoffing was manifested by the audience members of the Phil Donahue show several years ago when brother Garland Elkins appeared as a guest to defend the withdrawal action against Marian Guinn by the Lord’s church in Collinsville, Oklahoma. Several of the audience

members scoffed at and ridiculed the comments of brother Elkins. And since the comments of brother Elkins were almost exclusively quotations from the Word of God, it can be said that the talk show host and many members of the audience scoffed and mocked at the veracity of God's Word and its right to govern us. In fact, at the very close of the program, one of the members of the audience stood and said, "From being here today, I just feel that you people are blinded by the Bible. They don't see anything but the Bible." That statement was not only an unintentional compliment, but also a sampling of the hostility to Scripture exhibited during the entire program. Certainly, Satan was proud of some of his servants that day!

Most of us have never been jeered on national television for what we believe. However, the vast majority of us as Christians have experienced some form of ridicule for our convictions. How should we respond to such treatment? The apostle Peter wrote to persecuted Christians who were evidently asking the same question. He reminded them to "take it patiently" and he pointed them to Jesus as the supreme example to mimic (I Peter 2:20-23). According to Peter, Christ's suffering for us is an example worthy of imitation. When Christ was reviled, He did not revile in retaliation. When He suffered, He did not threaten in return.

Furthermore, Peter instructed these suffering saints not to be afraid or terrified at their persecutors (I Peter 3:14). In fact, he exhorted,

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's

sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy (I Peter 4:12-13).

The point of all this for us is that we cannot expect to avoid conflict with our enemies, Satan’s servants. The conflict is inevitable! If men and women mocked the message of God in the Old Testament, they are certainly going to scoff at it today. If the servants of Satan ridiculed the Master and His message then, even to the point of murdering Him, they are certainly going to sneer at the Master’s followers today. “Yea, and all that would live godly lives in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Tim. 3:12). Our task is to fight the battle and as those who suffer according to the will of God, to commit the keeping of our souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator (I Peter 4:19).

3. **Sidetrack.** Knowing that he cannot successfully allure everyone into total secularism. Satan employs his servants with the risk of sidetracking those individuals who might be interested in religious matters. In fact, there is an oft told fable which tells of three apprentice demons who were coming to earth to finish their apprenticeship. Before departing, they were telling Satan about their plans to tempt and ruin men. The first said, “I will tell them that there is no God.” Satan said, “That will delude some but not many, for they know that there is a God.” The second said, “I will tell men that Jesus was an imposter and that the Bible is a fraud.” Again, Satan replied, “You will deceive some but not the majority. There is too much evidence of the Deity of Jesus and the inspiration of the Scriptures.” The third demon said, “I will tell men that there is a God, that Jesus is real and that the Bible is true. I will tell them

that they are obligated to give their lives to God and Jesus and to follow the Bible.” As the two other demons scorned such a plan, the third demon added, “And then I will tell them that there is no hurry. I will tell them to satisfy their desires now and serve God later.” “Go,” said Satan, “and you will ruin them by the thousands.” Perhaps, “billions” would be a more appropriate estimate. As already stated, the above story is just a fable. However, the central thrust of the story truly illustrates the *modus operandi* of Satan and his servants.

The Scriptures clearly teach that our primary purpose upon this earth is to “fear God and keep his commandments” (Eccl. 12:13). What does the Lord require of us?

...to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes... (Deut. 10:12-13).

It is our task to let our lights so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify the Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16). Our life’s aspiration should be to present ourselves before God in judgment “unblameable in holiness” (I Thess. 3:13). We must be diligent in order that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless at the last day (II Peter 3:14).

Of course, Satan’s task is to divert us from fulfilling the purpose for which we have been created. In order to do this, he seeks to convince us that we can never be fulfilled in the pursuit of righteousness and godliness. His servants in the media promote this message via the television screen, movie screen, billboards, magazine and

newspaper ads, songs, books, *ad infinitum*. Through these avenues Satan allures us to focus upon the earthly and to forget the heavenly. Gus Nichols once said,

We’re just pilgrims passing through this world,
but many have fallen in love with the
campground.

Some years ago, brother Franklin Camp wrote that it was his considered judgment that worldliness was the greatest threat facing the church. Was he an alarmist in his assessment? I think not! Indeed, there is an obsession in our age with “things.” Millions are possessed by the desire to possess more and more. Modern man isn’t satisfied with a big bank account. He wants the bank too. In our comfortable and affluent society man has become smug and arrogant. He has forgotten God. Knowing of man’s tendency to forget Him in prosperity, God warned the Israelites not to get sidetracked and forget Him (Deut. 8:7-20). Jesus admonished, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (John 6:27).

Not everyone has followed the Lord’s advice. In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of the thorny ground hearers who, when they have heard, go forth and are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection (Luke 8:14). This is evidently what happened to Demas. Some of the saddest words in all of Scripture were penned by Paul when he wrote, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (II Tim. 4:10). The rich young ruler allowed his love of money to sidetrack him from following Jesus. His attitude prompted Jesus to comment,

...How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (Luke 18:24-25).

The rich fool of Luke 12 aptly depicts the average American's philosophy of life. Most people in America would look upon him as a glorious success, but in the eyes of God he was a foolish failure. When will we ever learn that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15)? We brought nothing into the world and it is certain that we can carry nothing out (Eccl. 5:15; I Tim. 6:7).

But it is not just the deceitfulness of riches that sidetrack us. The "lusts of other things entering in, choke the word and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4:19). Martha was cumbered about much serving and anxious and troubled about many things. The things she was preoccupied with were not in and of themselves immoral. However, her devotion to these tasks sidetracked her from the greater devotion of learning the Word of God (Luke 10:40-42). The parable of the great supper (Luke 14:16-24) pictures many being invited to a great supper. One excused himself on the grounds that he had bought a piece of ground and needed to go see it. Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. I pray thee have me excused." Another man pointed to his new wife as his reason for not coming.

In each of the above examples, the affairs of this life sidetracked and crowded out other more important obligations. Is it any different today? Recreation, vacation, vocation—all this and more, often preoccupies and sidetracks us from our God-given purpose. Satan

does not mind an occasional visit to the church pew provided that we sit in our easy chair the rest of the time. The plain truth of the matter is that we have all too regularly put the Lord’s work on the back-burner while we selfishly pursue our own pleasures. The thrust of sin is captured by looking at the middle letter of the word. The middle letter of the word “sin” is the letter “I.” And that is precisely where the problem lies. I will do what I want to do when I want to do it, but I will not inconvenience myself to walk across the street to talk to my neighbor about Jesus. A preacher can call a member of the church and ask him to assist in a Bible study one evening for approximately an hour and receive a negative answer on the basis that the church member is just too busy. Yet, the preacher can call this same member and invite him to play a round of golf or go to a ballgame, or go fishing, hunting, (activities which take much longer than an hour), and suddenly the busy church member can find an immediate opening in his schedule. And why? Because he loves the world more than he loves the spiritual. Monkey trappers in North Africa have a clever method of catching their prey. A number of gourds are filled with nuts and firmly fastened to a branch of a tree. Each has a hole just large enough for the unwary monkey to stick his forepaw into it. When the hungry monkey discovers the nuts, he quickly grasps a handful, and attempts to eat them. However, the hole is too small for him to withdraw his clenched fist. This agitates the monkey and he begins to wail. The hunters simply follow these wailing sounds right to their prey. The monkey does not have enough sense to open his hand and let go in order to escape, and is easily taken captive.

Isn't this a picture of many today? The devil with his crafty devices appeals to the appetites of our flesh. As long as we hold on to the worldly bait we cannot escape from Satan's trap. But Satan keeps on urging, "Don't let go. Enjoy the pleasure of your sin just a little bit longer." So, listening to the tempter's alluring voice we continue in our evil way. John's inspired admonition will help us avoid letting Satan's servants sidetrack us. He wrote,

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (I John 2:15-17).

Satan's "Spiritual" Servants

As noted in the introduction of the lesson, perhaps the most alarming observation of all is that Satan's servants are not confined to the secular world. In fact, some of his greatest servants are religious folks who believe in God and regard the Bible as a divine product. These servants are scattered across the religious world and even our own brotherhood. Their methods are serpentine. Sadly, some of these servants are sincerely deluded and unaware of the fact that they are Satan's tools. On the other hand, some of these servants know better and sanctimoniously go about the business of scheming, and snaring humanity into Satan's clutches. And how do they effect such? They:

1. **Scorn.** Secular people are not the only ones

who scoff and scorn the truth of God’s Word. Some of the all-time greatest scoffers have been religiously minded folks.

The New Testament reports the activities of some of these scoffers. Upon hearing Jesus denounce infatuation with money, “the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things and derided him” (Luke 16:14). The last phrase in the passage is quite interesting in Greek. The words “derided him” are translated from the Greek word “ekmukterizo.” A similar word “mukterizo” is used in Galatians 6:7 and means “to turn up one’s nose in scorn and hence to mock, deride.” The word used in Luke 16:14 is “ekmuterizo,” the only difference being the “ek” at the beginning of the word. In this particular instance, the “ek” at the beginning of the word functions as an intensifier. Thus, what the Pharisees did to Jesus in Luke 16:14 is described as intensive sneering, scoffing, or mocking.

A similar distinction is found in a comparison of Acts 17:32 and Acts 2:13. In Acts 17, the apostle Paul preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the Athenians. The record says,

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter (Acts 17:32).

The Greek word for “mocked” in this text is from “chleuazo” which Thayer defines as meaning “to mock, deride, or jeer.” Strong’s concordance defines it to mean “to throw out the lip, i.e., to jeer at.” What is especially fascinating about this word is that an intensified form of it appears in Acts 2:13. Some who witnessed the miracle of the apostles speaking in tongues mocked

(from *diachleuazo*) and accused the apostles of intoxication.

Still, a third Greek word in the New Testament for “mocking” is “empaizo,” found in thirteen passages (Matt. 2:16; 20:19; 27:29,31,41; Mark 10:34; 15:20,31; Luke 14:29; 18:32; 22:63; 23:11,36). It is a compound Greek word from “en” meaning “in” and “paizo” which means “to play, to sport with or against someone.” Most of the aforementioned passages where “empaizo” is used depict Christ being trifled with or toyed with during His persecution and subsequent crucifixion. Jesus had predicted that this very thing would happen to Him (Mark 10:34; Luke 18:32). Herod and his men of war sported with Him by arraying Him in a gorgeous robe and ridiculing His claim to Deity (Luke 23:11). The soldiers of the governor,

...stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him (Matt. 27:28-31).

As if He had not been through enough, while He hung upon the cross, the chief priests, elders, and scribes taunted Him from beneath the cross saying,

He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He

trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God (Matt. 27:42-43).

Luke’s account of the mocking uses “ekmukterizo,” the intensified form of mocking discussed earlier. In fact, this very scenario was predicted by David in Psalm 22:7-8,

All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

Incidentally, “ekmukterizo” is the word used in the Septuagint translation of Psalm 22:7.

The religious scorners are still alive. Tragically, some of them are brethren. Though they do not scorn Jesus in the manner depicted above, they scorn the precious body, the church. Remember that the relationship between Christ and the church is so intimate that when Jesus confronted Saul about persecuting the church He asked, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou **me**?” (Acts 9:4). Luke records that Saul made havock of the church (Acts 8:3). The verb “made havock” is from “lumainomai” which means to ravage or waste. Metaphorically, it means “to disgrace as by insult, treat with indignity, injure or destroy.” Though not guilty of physical persecution of the church, some of our brethren are making havoc of the precious body of Christ. In their speeches, they disgrace the Lord’s body by insulting its distinctiveness. Rubel Shelly, Joe Beam, Mike Cope, and others of the same stripe, persistently scorn and ridicule the church of our Lord in their writings and speeches. Should someone read this charge and answer by saying,

“No, they don’t ridicule the church of our Lord, they ridicule the Church of Christ,” then we would respond by pointing out who the real sectarians are. To consider the church of Christ as different from the church of our Lord is sectarianism of the rankest sort. The truth of the matter is that men like Rubel Shelly count the church as a denomination among denominations. With sneering sarcasm they make fun of pattern theology, instrumental music being regarded as sin, the distinctiveness and oneness of the church, and other items too numerous to mention. I tell you, even weeping, that these soldiers of fortune have left the Lord’s army and have become enemies of the truth. With their smooth words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:18).

Paul was faced with Satan’s servants in sheep’s clothing during his ministry. He wrote concerning some of the false teachers of his day,

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (II Cor. 11:13-15).

The word for “ministers” in this passage is “diakonoi” which Thayer defines as one who executes the command of another, a servant. The point is this: if the apostle Paul was permitted to call false teachers in his day the servants of Satan, we should not be denounced for doing so today. Without question, some of Satan’s most effective and destructive servants in the world today are false teachers. This is exactly why Jesus warned, “Beware of

false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matt. 7:15). John decreed,

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (I John 4:1).

2. **Subvert.** Webster defines the word “subvert” as follows: “to overthrow from the foundation...to pervert or corrupt by an undermining of morals, allegiance or faith.” Paul wrote to Titus and noted,

...for there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers...whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake (Titus 1:10-11).

The Greek word “anetrepousin” employed in this passage for the word “subvert” is utilized elsewhere in the New Testament only in II Timothy 2:18, wherein it is said that Hymenaeus and Philetus concerning the truth had erred and overthrown (from “anetrepo”) the faith of some. Would any deny that Hymenaeus and Philetus had become Satan’s servants? Then, why do some refuse to classify the present day subverters among us as servants of Satan as well?

Reverting back to Webster’s definition of the word “subvert,” please note the words “to overthrow from the foundation.” This is precisely what the change agents in the churches of Christ are attempting to do. They are striking right at the foundation of our faith by questioning how we determine Bible authority in matters of faith and practice. If they can change the way we determine what is and is not divinely authorized, then

the door is open for just about any and every innovation. These saboteurs of the faith are guilty of sedition which is defined by Webster as “incitement of resistance to or insurrection against lawful authority.” Though they would certainly not admit it, the change agents in the church have influenced many members to resist the lawful authority of Jesus Christ and His Holy Word. Some seem to have an attitude which says, “So what if the Scriptures prohibit women from taking a leading role in mixed assemblies of the church! That was then and this is now! We want them to be more involved and so they will be!” This attitude is seen in any number of other areas. Satan’s servants are busily engaged in subverting souls.

3. **Suppress.** Another tactic of Satan’s spiritual servants is to suppress the truth. Paul spoke of those who suppress (NKJV) the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). With sly semantics these servants emphasize what suits them and ignore what doesn’t. The word “sly” means “clever in concealing one’s aims or ends.” Semantics is defined as “exploitation of ambiguity.” This clever exploitation of ambiguity can be heard in just about every speech these brethren deliver. Knowing that they cannot fully tip their theological hand at the risk of alienating their hearers from the outset, these preachers will slowly, but surely, send up one theological trial balloon after another until they find the areas of change perceived as acceptable. They suppress their true beliefs and views about subjects considered too volatile to address at the present time.

Nature provides us with an illustration that closely resembles the insidious tactics employed by our adversary and his servants. According to scientists, Arctic

polar bears feed almost entirely on seals. To enjoy such a meal, they sometimes resort to a cunning bit of trickery. If the hole through which the seal gets his food is near the edge of the ice, the polar bear will take a deep breath and swim under water to its exact location. Remaining below the surface, he will then make a tiny scratching sound, imitating a fish. When the charmed seal hears this, he dives in for a quick supper, only to find himself suddenly entrapped in the huge, hungry embrace of his predator. In similar fashion, Satan’s servants make enough familiar sounds in their speeches to draw us into making the plunge only to find ourselves engulfed and entrapped in the clutches of full scale religious error. When Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month of his own devising, he was shrewd enough to make it “like unto the feast that is in Judah” (I Kings 12:32). Likewise, the change agents in the church today make their innovations on the front end similar enough to existing practices to avoid immediate rejection by everyone. But, once the plunge to alter the Word of God is made, the hungry bear awaits and it is only a matter of time until full apostasy sets in.

In addition, the “spiritual” servants of Satan will often suppress their discussion of certain sections of Scripture while focusing exclusively upon others. Jim Woodroof’s book on the church in transition emphasized the gospel accounts as the exclusive source of power for the Christian. In fact, he wrote,

Plugging into any part of the Scriptures, except the Gospels, expecting there to find power, is like plugging an electric motor into a reflection of a power outlet (**The Church In Transition**, p. 34).

What about the epistles? Is there no power in the epistles? Is there no Christ in the epistles? One of the most Christ-exalting passages in all of Holy Writ is found, not in the gospel accounts, but in one of the epistles (Phil. 2:5-11). I would certainly not elevate the epistles above the gospel accounts, but neither would I be audacious enough to exalt the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John above the inspired epistles. I do not believe in a “Red-letter” Jesus. In other words, I do not believe that the only sacred truths are those spoken by Jesus Himself. Paul said that the things he wrote were the commandments of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37). Furthermore, every word of every epistle originated with Jesus who gave it to the Holy Spirit who gave it to the penmen who gave it to us (John 16:12-15). The words of Romans are just as much from Jesus as the words of John. Therefore, any attempt to elevate one section of the New Testament above another is specious.

Then there are the servants of Satan who suppress the written and oral proclamation of the truth. This author knows of a preacher who formerly preached in East Tennessee. After the construction of a beautiful edifice in which to worship, the preacher was informed by his elders that there would be no more sermons on the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage delivered from the pulpit. They “reasoned” that such sermons would run people off at a time when the church couldn’t afford it. The preacher informed them that he could not and would not abide by such a stipulation and thus resigned. Similarly, a preacher who is also an elder in a Mid-Western state returned from a convention in Nashville and announced to his home congregation that the elders had decided in the midst of so much

controversy concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage, that they were not going to adopt a particular position on the subject. He, like many others, refuses to preach on the subject for fear of alienating his hearers. Furthermore, the aforementioned church had for some time received a bundle of a monthly paper known as **Fulton County Gospel News**. Many of the members looked forward to receiving the paper each month. However, some of the members mentioned to my father, the editor of the paper, that they sure did miss receiving the publication and that they had not received it for approximately four months. About this time the paper began to be put out for circulation again. And what was the subject matter during the mysterious four month gap of circulation? You guessed it. The lead article of each of the four missing issues was on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Is it possible that the same elders who decided not to take a position on marriage, divorce, and remarriage also decided to withhold from their members information that might help them to take a position? If so, how can such suppressors of the truth sleep at night?

Subduing Satan’s Servants

As we look about us and see the multitude of Satan’s servants we can identify with David who said, “Mine enemies are lively, and they are strong; and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied” (Psm. 38:19). On another occasion he wrote, “Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me” (Psm. 56:2). Is there any hope of victory against such innumerable enemies? Indeed, there is! Our hope for subduing our countless enemies is the same as David’s

hope and Israel's hope. After expressing his anxiety over his multitude of enemies, David said,

What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me (Psm. 56:3-4).

God gave similar encouragement to the Israelites as they prepared to go out to war against their enemies (Deut. 20:1-4; 28:7; Josh. 10:25; Num. 10:9). This promise was conditional and predicated upon Israel's obedience (Exod. 23:22; Lev. 26:7; Josh. 7:1-26).

The same Lord who defeated fleshly Israel's enemies can defeat the enemies of Spiritual Israel, the church. Though the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, we are still at war and must fight the good fight of faith as good soldiers who have clothed ourselves with the Christian armor (II Cor. 10:3-4; I Tim. 6:12; II Tim. 2:3-4; Eph. 6:10-18). We are not without weapons. We have the sword of the Spirit with which to pursue our enemies and defeat them. Thankfully, we are not helpless to conquer our foes. God has provided us with the necessary ammunition to win the battle. In order to subdue Satan's servants we must:

1. **Saturate.** We must saturate our hearts with love for and knowledge of the truth. The love for God's word expressed in Psalm 119 is a good model for us to mimic. Also, we must saturate our hearts with fervent prayer. The fervent prayer of righteous men still avails much (James 5:16). Let us pray for this nation to return to righteousness and moral excellence (Prov. 14:34). Let us pray for the religious world to unite upon the plain and simple truth of God's word (I Peter 4:11). Let us pray for our precious brotherhood to return to an

unswerving commitment to be a distinctive, undenominational exhibition of New Testament Christianity. In the next place, let’s saturate our communities with the proclamation of the good old Jerusalem gospel. Let us once again evangelize with zeal and a sense of urgency.

2. **Scrutinize.** Due to the shrewd and skilful sophistry of Satan and his servants we must ever be on guard. Like the noble Bereans we must scrutinize whatever message we hear in light of Scripture (Acts 17:11). We must test the teachers (I John 4:1). Paul admonished the Colossians,

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ (Col. 2:8).

We must not believe something simply because it is spoken by a sentimental, sappy, silver-tongued orator. We must be able to discern between pseudo-scholarship and scholarship in fact.

3. **Stigmatize.** Though it is not pleasant to do so, there are times when we must stigmatize, a word which means to characterize something as disgraceful. With reference to the secular world, we must mark its immoral philosophy as disgraceful. We must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Instead, we must expose these works and lay them bare (Eph. 5:11). Some will ridicule and scoff at our conviction, but we must be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (I Cor. 15:58). The stigma formerly connected to sins such as adultery, homosexuality, materialism, stealing, cursing, dancing, immodest apparel, and others too numerous to mention, must once again be felt in our

nation.

The Lord's church has the responsibility to stigmatize false teachers in order that they might be silenced (Rom. 16:17; Titus 1:9-14). Paul did not hesitate to confront false teachers head-on because he knew they threatened to subvert the souls of the very ones whom he had converted. Upon discovering that Elymas, a false prophet, was trying to turn away Sergius Paulus from the faith, Paul minced no words. He said,

And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? (Acts 13:10).

This same apostle publicly denounced Hymenaeus, Philetus, Alexander the coppersmith, Demas and others. Even the loving Lord publicly denounced the false teachers of His day (Matt. 15:3-14; 16:6; 23:1-39). His letters to the churches of Asia manifested His displeasure with false teachers (Rev. 2:14-15, 20-22).

In short, the best way to silence false teachers is to follow the mandate of Scripture to mark and avoid them (II John 9-11). Godly elders must lead the way and we must follow. Until our brethren unite together to stand as one against the false teachers among us, we cannot expect to win the battle.

We conclude with the reminder that together we can subdue the servants of Satan. Remember, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). Let us with zeal fight the good fight of faith and look forward to the day when our Commander-in-Chief calls us home!

Blank Before Section Division

Fifth Annual

TRUTH IN LOVE LECTURESHIP



Theme:
*“Soldiers Of Christ,
Arise”*

Section IV:
**The End
Of The Battle**

Chapter 16

“Unfaithful” Soldiers Will Be Punished

Keith A. Mosher, Sr.



Keith Mosher, Sr., a faithful proclaimer of the gospel of Christ, received his formal education from Cleveland State University, University of Louisville, and Memphis School of Preaching ~ Keith was born in Pennsylvania ~ Presently he is a full-time teacher at the Memphis School of Preaching ~ Keith and Dorothy have been married thirty years and have three children and two grandchildren.

An old man accused of deserting his wife was brought before the judge. After the judge had lectured him severely on the sin and trifling character of desertion, he asked the old man, “What do you have to say?” “Judge,” answered the elderly man, “You have me wrong. I’m no deserter; I’m a refugee!” Thinking about this anecdote one wonders what those Christians who become unfaithful or apostate are going to say to the Judge of all when they appear before Him (II Cor. 5:10)?

This **Truth In Love Lectureship** is devoted to the theme, **“Soldiers Of Christ, Arise!”** and this particular lesson deals with the punishment that does await those baptized believers who desert God’s army, the church, for the world. Paul Sain and the elders of the East Hill congregation have selected a wonderful and needed theme and our commendations and prayers are with them. In order to develop this assignment the

Biblical term “soldier;” the fact of apostasy; the punishment that awaits; and the need to reach out are discussed.

God’s Soldier: A Bible Term

Old Testament usage of the term, soldier, (*ben qedud*)¹ is limited in meaning to actual military persons.² In the New Testament at least two applications and three forms of a word are used.³ Soldiers (*strateum*, a military host) are under command (Acts 23:10); serve (*strateuo*) in a camp; and are, generally speaking, military personnel (*stratiotes*).⁴ However, Paul applies the appellation, “fellow-soldier” to Epaphroditus and Archippus (Phil. 2:25; Philemon 2; cf. *sustratiotees*). Paul’s usage is spiritual and such usage is also found in Paul’s writings to Timothy whom Paul reminds to “endure hardness as a good soldier” (II Tim. 2:3). The latter term is again, *stratiotees*, applied in the spiritual sense, but Paul uses a term “soldier” in the very next verse that demands attention. This last word is *stratologeasantai*.⁵

Bauer informs that *stratologeasantai* is a reference to an enlisted man—one who has been **chosen** in another’s army.⁶ The spiritual application of this latter idea is obvious. Christians are enlisted in a great army, the church, to which devotion to serving the Great Commander must be given.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (II Tim. 2:4).

Those familiar with military organizations are aware of those called conscripts who are enrolled into

service by the draft or compelled to be soldiers because they were captured by the enemy.⁷ One expert writes:

The opposite of voluntary enlistment is conscription, carried out by the national state. The resulting military force lacks the moral characteristics of a voluntary army; it is essentially a machine requiring severe discipline, its cohesion being maintained by the threat of punishment. Its great problems, desertion and slackness among the troops, can be kept within bounds only by strong organization and leadership.⁸

The child of God is a *volunteer* not a *conscript*. Surely the Christian's need to desert can not be blamed on some compulsion from God without that individual's being able to choose as Calvinism has long taught. Those who desert God's army have either walked away; been neglected or neglectful; wasted their opportunities; or they have hypocritical hearts (Luke 15—the lost sheep, coin, prodigal, and elder brother).

No one, according to Scripture, who leaves the church (i.e. deserts God's chosen army) can ever lay the blame anywhere except on self. He is "absent without leave." As a lost sheep he may wander away (cf. Gal. 6:1). Perhaps he has not been taught and therefore neglected as a coin is lost. Or, as so many, he may have wasted the precious gift of salvation (cf. II Peter 2:20-22). However, the worst kind of "soldier" may be like the "elder brother" who only served for self-interest. Even though he was "at home," he was still a deserter!

God's Soldier: Desertion Is Possible

A most popular doctrine of many Protestant groups is the impossibility of a Christian's apostatizing.⁹

Sometimes this teaching is popularized as “once saved always saved.” This “perseverance” of the saints error is wedded to the doctrines of original sin, God’s selecting the saved, and the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in order for one to be empowered to respond to God, since man’s sinful nature **cannot** respond. A verse often used by these “Calvinistic” advocates is I John 3:9—

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;
for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot
sin, because he is born of God.

The background of the teaching that a soldier of Christ can not so sin as to be considered a deserter and deserving of punishment is an ancient teaching known as gnosticism.

Gnosticism is not directly referred to in the New Testament, but its “mystery of iniquity” was already at work in the apostolic church (II Thess. 2:7). The gnostic influence was not full-blown until the second century and it is hard precisely to define the doctrine since there were a variety of teachers and shades of opinions among those ancients.¹⁰ However, Greek philosophy, Phrygian angel worship and the occult, and Judaism were factors in the formation of the movements (Col. 2:8-23). The gnostic (to know) boasted that he alone had, subjectively, the knowledge of salvation.¹¹ Scott writes:

A section of the church was dissatisfied with the simplicity of the gospel, and sought to advance to something higher by adopting the current speculations.¹²

The gnostics were much concerned with the origin of evil and their esoteric “secret” was that flesh is evil and since Jehovah and Jesus created flesh these latter

two were not the ultimate “god” to whom one could look for salvation.¹³ Since flesh and spirit were antithetic in the gnostic system, Jesus and Christ were said to be two distinct beings. And, since flesh is evil one can not affect his spirit by what he does in his body since the “spirit” of man is a separate entity. Once the spirit is “free” from the body either through ascetic or hedonistic activity one can not be lost (See Colossians 2:21-23 where the record from Paul is about those who practice a “neglecting of the body.”) The modern form of gnosticism is “once saved always saved.” That is, a child of God **can not** (absolutely can not) so sin in his body as to lose his salvation or “fall from grace.”

The epistle of I John (c.a. A.D. 85-90) is a polemic against the rise of gnostic influence.¹⁴ The statement that the child of God “cannot” sin was intended by John as a correction of the gnostic idea that sin in the body does not affect the soul (I John 3:9). One **cannot** keep sinning and think that he “knows” truth for this is in reality the “spirit of error” (I John 4:6) and is “anti-Christ” (I John 4:3; cf. II Thess. 2:1-7). John had already written that for a child of God to deny that he (as a spirit being per gnosticism) had ever sinned or had sin was deceptive and profane (I John 1:8-10).

The body and spirit are inter-related in sin and salvation (Rom. 6:12) and sins of the “flesh” do affect one’s eternal destiny (I Cor. 6:18). The sincere Bible student will recall that listings of sins of the flesh that keep one from heaven were written to Christians (cf. Gal. 5:19-20). Paul ordered that one Christian be delivered to Satan so that Christian’s “flesh” might be “destroyed” (I Cor. 5:5). Why would Paul condemn the flesh in order to save the spirit?

The Corinthians were begotten (i.e. “born-again”) through the gospel, yet they sinned (I Cor. 1, 5, 11, etc.; cf. I Cor. 4:15). If the seed (Word of God) “remains” in the Christian (I John 3:9), that is if he keeps walking in truth by confessing sin and obeying God, the Christian will not fall away (I John 1:7; II Peter 1:5-11). But the “seed” (Word of God) can be **choked out** by worldliness (Luke 8:11). A child of God can fall from grace (Gal. 5:4-6). It was said of Benjamin that the “lad **cannot** leave his father” (Gen. 44:22). But Benjamin **did** leave. Often children are told that they **cannot** play in a street, but often they disobey! For John to write that a child of God **cannot** sin is to write that such sin is not a life-style for Christians and that God’s soldiers **cannot** ignore the fact that what is done in the body affects the soul.

One Calvinist argued that God’s children were “sheep” (John 10:27-28). He further surmised that once one was a “sheep” that one could never become a “goat.” Such thinking abuses a figure of speech by making it literal, and such speculation ignores the fact that sheep can go astray, be lost, and be eaten of wolves (Isa. 53:6; Matt. 10:6; Matt. 7:15). A soldier of Christ can be “absent without permission!” He can be lost.

Bible students are well-aware that even Jesus faced the temptation of sin and conquered it (Heb. 4:15). What is the “danger” inherent in a Christian’s sins and why warn against such if one can not so sin as to fall from grace? Emotional sinners often respond to questions about their once saved—always saved view by exclaiming that no amount of sin can separate a child of God from His love. Such sinners are fond of quoting Romans 8:35-39 as a proof-text for their position. First, nothing is mentioned in the latter passage about sin and second,

external things such as “creatures,” “height,” and “depth” etc., are things people fear. Such things hold no fear for the Christian who follows the “law of the Spirit of life” (Rom. 8:1), but one’s sin can separate one from God if that sin is un-confessed (Isa. 59:1-2; I John 5:16). One can cease to love God even though God’s love is constant (Jude 20-21).

A tangential teaching from those who believe that a Christian soldier will never be punished is that though one sins one **must** and **always will** come back before one dies. (Some in the church hold such a position on Proverbs 22:6). However, some apostates are pictured in the Bible as without a place to repent for they were returning to Judaism (Heb. 6:6). Other disciples are said to have turned their backs on Jesus “and walked no more with him” (John 6:66). One might also ask whether Ananias and Sapphira **ever** came back (Acts 5:1-10)!

From I Peter 1:4-5 some Calvinists have argued that one cannot fall because one is **kept** by God’s power. However, the passage reads “kept by the power of God through faith” (I Peter 1:5). Can one stop believing?

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God (Heb. 3:12).

Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck (I Tim. 1:19).

The soldier of Christ can depart from the battle and bring shame to self, the army (church), and his Commander (Heb. 12:2). The Christian serves in a volunteer army and one would think that there would be no reason to leave. Yet many do.

God’s Deserted Soldiers: Punishment Awaits

Punishment, which is a penalty inflicted on an offender, awaits not only those outside of Christ, but also those who become unfaithful soldiers (Matt. 25:31-46). The severity of eternal separation from God is a reality for deserters from God’s army (Matt. 10:28). Those who teach that a Christian can not fall from grace and so be lost in a devil’s hell are caught in their own dilemma. They argue that God chooses the saved and that those so chosen can not resist God’s grace and so must become God’s children. Such a doctrine makes God responsible for one’s salvation and for one’s being lost. So, Calvinism insists that no Christian could ever go to hell. The apostle Peter knew of no such teaching and wrote:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (II Peter 2:20-22).

The **Expositor’s Greek Testament** posits the teaching for the discussion of the above passage as “The consequences of falling away.”¹⁵ Those of whom the apostle Peter spoke had once been good soldiers of Christ who had **not** enmeshed themselves in the affairs of the

world (II Tim. 2:4). But, anti-law teachers had invaded their ranks (cf. Rubel Shelly, Steve Flatt, Marvin Phillips, et al. today) and had corrupted the minds of many (II Peter 2:1-19). Compromises of license over liberty and enticements to the flesh led many ancient soldiers of the Lord from the battlefield of truth. Stachan writes about those:

...who have been impressed with Christian Truth, and have had strength to separate themselves from their own surroundings and customs; but are led to return through the compromises suggested by the false teachers.¹⁶

For a servant in God's army to give in to doctrinal compromise is deserving of punishment. One can not give licentious license to one's passions whether moral or doctrinal and still please the Lord. The Lord's army marches on the "way of Truth" (II Peter 2:2). Such truth is inherent in Christ's teaching and is the "highway of holiness" (Isa. 35:8). The Lord's army bivouacs along the "right way" (ASV "straight way") (II Peter 2:15). For unfaithful soldiers to take another road exposes them to the enemy and brings dire consequences. The "latter end" of such deserters finds them worse than **before** they entered God's army (II Peter 2:20)!

Imagine a soldier who joins an army at a time when strong, vicious enemies are coming against his country. The soldier is desirous of defending his home and his land and so endures rigorous training, makes many new "buddies," and vows to fight with them to death. On the way home from basic training, however, the soldier catches a ride with someone who seems to have great wealth and charisma. This one begins to entice the soldier to desert and to learn how "not to be

a sucker” but to make much money from illicit war-time activities. The soldier is enticed, gives in, and deserts! Later, when the war is finished, the soldier wants to see his “buddies” again but knows he can not. His latter end is worse than the first and no doubt there are many reasons.

The fictitious soldier in the above illustration is now a coward. He has failed his Commander, his “buddies,” and his country. His honor, peace of mind, and even his freedom are gone. He faces military charges for desertion in the face of the enemy which violation is subject to death. He also faces the knowledge that many of his friends did fight the battle and many suffered for the cause. All of his life he must remember what he did and to whom he did it.

But even worse than the military deserter is the Christian who deserts his Christ, lets his fellow-soldiers fight the battles, and uses his life to “buy and sell and get gain” (James 4:13). Such an apostate servant of the Lord has,

...trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:29).

In one description of the judgment scene, the Christ taught that there would be witnesses present who “could rise up in judgment” (cf. Matt. 12:41-42). When a Christian deserter faces the “Captain” of his salvation at judgment is it possible that he will be faced with at least the knowledge of those who did remain steadfast? Suppose a mother must face her daughter or a father his son (Matt. 10:35-37)? Is not the latter end “worse”

for those who once were good soldiers but now have lost not only as an alien sinner might but also as a dishonored deserter! Is it any wonder that such will be punished and punished much worse than one who never knew the truth? People who have never known battle suffer, but much more those who have known—and deserted! Staff Sergeant Jarvis D. Anderson wrote:

If you reach your goal of riches; What then?
If you dress in pin-stripe britches? What then?

When your glory has diminished; What then?
And the doctor says your finished; What then?

When each fading moment tells, like the echoes
from a bell, That you're headed
straight for hell; What then?

Deserters Need Help

Several years ago a fellow-preacher told of wondering why the Bible did not contain a course of action for reaching lost children of God. There was teaching on their “lostness,” but was there not a plan? Further study revealed **two** plans from Galatians 6:1-5 and James 5:19-20. Deserters face hell and those who know of deserters face hell if they do not try to reach them.

Plan number one is to get those who are spiritual, to reach out to those “overtaken in a fault” (Gal. 6:1). The term, *spiritual*, is used in I Corinthians 12:1 where the translators added *gifts* to the term. The original is “pneumatikos” which carries the idea, in the Corinthian letter, of a miraculous endowment from God.¹⁸ Some think that such a “spiritual gift” can be ordinary using I Peter 4:10, but at least the idea is that those *especially*

able are to go to brethren who are falling away and to *restore* them. At this point, elders, deacons, and preachers come to mind as especially able—at least they should be able—to reach the unfaithful soldier. Other members should be growing into this ability and, especially if one is teaching classes, studying the things needed to recapture a deserting soldier (Gal. 6:2). (If I were an elder, I do not believe I could sleep very well knowing how many wander away from the church.)

Plan number two involves following the challenge from James:

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (James 5:19-20).

Today more than 50% of the churches' members leave for the world. In Memphis, Tennessee alone, there are about 10,000 active members, but there are also nearly 15,000 inactive!

While doing local work at the Gragg Avenue congregation in Memphis, I helped with a survey of out-of-duty members. Ten questions were asked each one and twenty-seven responses began to show a pattern.¹⁹ Not one thought the congregation had been unfriendly, but each one did think that he had “never been a part.” Each “deserter” lacked Bible knowledge and each had **not** been assimilated into the **work** of the church. (Congregations which do not use new members in some fashion have an unusually large drop-out rate.) One brother responded that he quit because “The preacher would not let him give his testimony.”²⁰

Such people as described above need to be

converted (James 5:19-20). Too often the procedure is to visit, to tell the one “we miss him,” and to tell him how much we “need” him back. The Holy Spirit, through James, instructs Christians to convert (“to turn from and turn to”) the delinquent, deserting soldier. The only way to convert someone is to **study** the Bible with him, but what topics should be studied?

The deserter is cold in heart; he has “left his first love” (Rev. 2:1-4). He needs reminding of Bible authority, the difference between the Testaments, what to do to be saved, what the church is, what it means to be faithful, etc. In other words, restudy with him the **same** things one would study with an alien sinner. This method of “converting” worked for **nine** of the twenty-seven, long-time delinquents at Gragg Avenue. They repented and returned (Acts 8:22). Some, when reminded of their baptisms and who immersed them and where broke into tears! Truly “Godly sorrow worketh repentance” (II Cor. 7:10).

Conclusion

A Christian soldier enlists in God’s army and becomes a chosen warrior. It seems strange that many desert in the face of worldly pleasure or life’s hardships. The failure to stand with brethren in the battle against evil so hardens the hearts of some that they find it nearly impossible to return. How ashamed such will be at judgment when they see their fellow-soldiers, battle-scarred and weary from the good fight of faith being ushered into heaven while the **deserter** is sent to hell (II Peter 2:20-22). How deeply the pain of failure will be for the cowardly Christian who failed his Captain’s orders and gave in to the enemy!

God wants His children to reach out to such. Perhaps a few soldiers who are “out of duty” can be turned again to their former posts. The battle is the Lord’s, but His army must not run away in the heat of the fray. “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10).

Endnotes

1 Robert Young, “Soldier,” in **Analytical Concordance to the Bible** (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprint 1973), 905. Young also references *chavil* (force), *chalats* (arms), and *isaba* (host).

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. See Matthew 8:9; 27:27; 28:12; Mark 15:16; Luke 7:8; 23:36; John 19:2,23,24,32,34; Acts 10:7; 12:4,6,18; 21:32,35; 23:23; 23:31; 27:31,32,42; 28:16.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, “stratologeo,” in **A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature**, Walter Bauer, 2 ed., rev. by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 770-71.

7 Many encyclopedias have large sections on the theory of war. See especially W.E.S., “The Theory and Conduct of War,” in **The New Encyclopedia Britannica**, ed. Philip W. Goetz, vol. 29 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989), 635-712.

8 Ibid, 705.

9 See T. W. Brents, **The Gospel Plan of Salvation**.

10 John Rutherford, “Gnosticism,” in **The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, vol. II, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1939), 1240-48.

11 Ibid., 1240.

12 Ibid., 1240-41. Rutherford is quoting from E. Scott, **The Apologetic of the New Testament**, 14.

13 Ibid., 1242.

14 Ibid., 1243.

15 R. H. Strachan, "The Second Epistle General of Peter," in **The Expositor's Greek Testament**, ed. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprint 1990), 141.

16 Ibid., 140.

17 S/Sgt. Jarvin D. Anderson, "What Then?" in **Sourcebook of 500 Illustrations**, ed. Robert G. Lee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 178.

18 Moulton and Milligan, "Pneumatikos," 878-79.

19 The questions included length of time in the church; whether other relatives were members; what bad or good impressions one had of the church; what view of the church and other members was held; whether the church had been of any help to them; and why did they leave and would they be back?

20 Ibid.

Chapter 17

Faithful Soldiers – Rewarded

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What a timely, thought provoking, and glorious theme for the fifth annual Truth In Love Lectureship—***"Soldiers Of Christ, Arise!"*** Many thanks to the great East Hill congregation and to brother Paul Sain for issuing another great challenge to stand fast in the faith, to speak the truth in love, to be a faithful soldier, and at last to gain the crown.

The people of God have been variously described in the New Testament; such metaphors would help us more easily understand our relationship to God, to each other as Christians, and to the world. Our closeness to each other, for example, is seen in the church being termed the household of faith or the family of God. Our privilege of worshipping our Creator is seen in its being called the temple of God. Our relationship to Christ as our sovereign is seen in its description as the kingdom of God. Our responsibility to fight the forces of evil, to defend the truth, and to contend earnestly for the faith

(Phil. 1:16; Jude 3) is seen in its being described as an army and we as soldiers.

When Paul spoke of “our warfare,” calling upon numerous military figures and expressions, he spoke of that with which he was very familiar. Throughout his travels, Paul observed countless garrisons of Roman soldiers and thousands of troops marching on the Roman roads. Constantly they were in quelling the wars and rumors of wars, transporting prisoners, and pursuing thieves. A number of times he was personally falsely arrested, beaten, bound by chains to armed soldiers; more than once he was rescued (from being killed) by Roman soldiers. The armor and duty of the soldiers were well known also to those addressed in Paul’s letters, for Roman soldiers were stationed in such places as Corinth, Philippi, Troas, Antioch, et al. They knew the sounds of the rattling and shining armor, the marching cadence, the bugle call, etc. They knew very well what it meant to have loved ones march off to war—and what it meant for them often not to return. We know of war today.

So great is our struggle in this world that God pictured it as a battle—WAR! It is a battle against God’s (and man’s) archenemy, Satan. It is the battle between everything that is good and everything that is evil, between God and Satan, between spiritual light and spiritual darkness.

New Testament Christianity is aggressive, militant, positive. God’s army is invading the very stronghold of Satan’s kingdom. We are soldiers of the Most High, equipped with the most powerful weapon ever existing—the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), with orders to rush and attack and cast down every stronghold of Satan (II Cor. 10:3-5). Does that sound like war, dear reader? The

weak of heart need not apply! Does anyone think for one moment that the devil will not put up a vicious, unrelenting resistance?

Some just do not like a fight. They are embarrassed when the truth is aggressively taught and defended, when God's army is marching to victory, when Paul is quoted as commanding, "Fight the good fight of the faith" (II Tim. 6:12). Their irenic spirit loses its composure when they are reminded of Paul's having "fought the good fight" (II Tim. 4:7). Do not misunderstand; it is never right to abuse people or to be mean. However, no battle can be successfully fought without fighting and contention.

Living the Christian life is a serious struggle. Paul's charge to Timothy was, "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 2:3). It is a **good** fight. Paul said, "I have fought the good fight" (II Tim. 4:7). It is righteous and just and right, for it is a war to free human beings from the domination, slavery, and eternal ruin of Satan. The soul of each of us is invaluable (Matt. 10:28; 16:25-26). Life is of intense importance.

War is a life and death struggle. Count the cost of losing your soul, dear friend, and the souls of your precious mate, children, friends. It is either conquer evil and Satan, or be conquered and destroyed forever by them—eternal life or eternal death. We **must not** fail fully to understand the serious, severe nature of the contest. The battlefield is the world, and the time for war is **now!**

Every person is called to be a soldier. No one can stay neutral. "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Matt. 12:30). The inactive, passive soul is warring against Christ. No

one is sitting on the sidelines. All are in the battle on either Satan’s side or the Lord’s side. No one is exempt from the danger, forces, and temptations of evil. Each accountable being experiences the struggle personally. And, “no man can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24).

Great blessings await the **faithful** soldier at the end of the conflict. Let us first examine the nature of the warfare itself and then examine the rewards of victory.

The Warfare

The battle is a moral confrontation. It is not a flesh and blood war. The field of conflict is not strewn with the physically wounded and dying or with bodies of the dead. “...we do not war according to the flesh,” but against “every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God” (II Cor. 10:3-5). “...not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers (spirit world–CAC) of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

The enemy is Satan; he and his army are the enemies of Christ the King. Just as all kings and kingdoms of the world have enemies, so has the eternal kingdom of Christ (Luke 11:14-23). Christ took on flesh and blood in order to “bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14), the one who bruised His heel (Gen. 3:15), and the one who “taketh away the word from their [those who hear the Word of Christ] heart, that they may not believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12). Indeed, he is our adversary (I Peter 5:8). Note: when the good seed of the kingdom was sown in the hearts of men, “while men slept, his enemy [Satan]

came and sowed tares also among the wheat.” What was the result? The tares at the judgment will be bundled up and burned (Matt. 13:24-30). What a vicious, dreadful foe!

Thus, God’s people war against Satan and his army, against sins, against human miseries, against every evil thought and deed, against every false and wicked way. God’s army turns the world upside down to bring it right side up, pulls down strongholds of error to erect fortifications of truth, wields the sword of truth to bring true and lasting peace. That is the Christian’s warfare, fighting the heinous, ruinous, enslaving, bitter nature and consequence of sin. Not carnal but spiritual weapons are used.

Christians are soldiers of the Lord. We are His army. How do we become soldiers? Countless millions have heard their countries’ call. They laid down their farming implements or their business ties. They left their wives, children, parents, friends, and donned the uniform and took up arms. They marched away to the sound of the drummer. They underwent much deprivation; marched through disease-laden, snake-infested, muddy swamps and fields; endured countless nights of bitter cold with little shelter and covering; ate often only what could be scavenged as they journeyed through foreign, hostile lands; saw their bosom friends and fellow soldiers cut down by the enemy; experienced vicious and painful injury; underwent perhaps indescribable and grievous torture at the hands of the enemy; and often returned home to find a burned-out dwelling, or shafts of marble marking the graves of children and/or wives. If such devotion exists for a physical nation and cause, what devotion and dedication should we have to the King of

kings, to the cause of all that is good and right, and to the salvation of our own souls and the souls of others!

You must enlist, you must volunteer. No one serves in the army of any land without enlisting as a soldier, agreeing to abide by their rules. One must be “enrolled...as a soldier” (II Tim. 2:4). You will not be drafted, however, for you are a free-will being. Christ invites (Matt. 11:28-30; Acts 2:40; II Peter 3:9; Rev. 22:17; 3:20), but you must volunteer as a soldier. And, in enrolling, you must honor and obey the steps of obedience (or enrolling) through hearing the Word (Rom. 10:12-17), believing the Word (Heb. 11:6), repenting, or dying to the love and practice of sin (Luke 13:1-5; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:1-2), confessing faith in Christ as God’s Son (Acts 8:37, Rom. 10:9-10), and being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 22:16; I Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16; John 3:3-5). No one glorifies the Father who is not in His army, the church (Eph. 3:21), which soldiers He will save at the last day (Eph. 5:25-27). Christ will not reward the soldiers of Satan!

The Reward

The faithful soldier’s reward will be wonderful.

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets (Luke 6:22-23; cf. Matt. 5:10-12).

The war is serious and severe, and the temptations of this life are strong and subtle, but victory is certain.

The servants of Satan will receive wages—eternal death in torment, separation from God, in hell fire with Satan (their master) for ever and ever (Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:10, 13-16; 21:8). Soldiers of Christ will be given eternal life with Him, their Master (John 14:1-6). Those who enroll in the army of King Jesus, upholding the blood-stained banner of Prince Immanuel, is in reality also embracing a cause leading to his own personal welfare. He both glorifies Christ and seeks his own self-interest, his own redemption through God's grace.

The triumph of Jesus is secure; He is guaranteed the victory.

...The kingdoms of this world is [literally "has"] become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever (Rev. 11:15).

So sure is victory that it is spoken of as having already occurred! His cause is secure, His honor, glory, and triumph are unassailable, and His magnificence shall be lauded by every tongue (Phil. 2:10-11). Though man was ruined by sin, separated from God, without hope to save himself, God moved toward Calvary, where He gave His only begotten Son to redeem man (Isa. 59:1-2; Rom. 5:8; John 3:16). God is the infinite embodiment of love, goodness, compassion, long-suffering, and forbearance. He sent His son, who is mighty to save (John 1:29; Heb. 5:8-9; 12:1-2). Oh, what love brought the second member of the Godhead to earth and caused Him to leave the bright and beautiful dwelling place of God to fulfill the mission of sacrificing Himself, enabling Him to rescue the creature from the mighty grip of sin and ruin!

The Lord showed by many infallible proofs that Satan's power can be overcome. He fought a great and

mighty battle against the evil one. He contended with the darkest forces of evil in their own domain. He triumphed over death, hell, and the grave. He bore the marks of the battle in His own body. He carried His own blood as High Priest to the mercy seat at the throne of God. As He triumphed, we can triumph! That is the message. Friend, He has been crowned (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:31-36; I Cor. 15:20-28). He reigns universally. Let us also join Him in victory!

What rewards may the Christian soldier anticipate when he shall have gone “the last mile of the way,” when he shall have fought his last battle, laid aside his armour, and begun his basking in the bosom of Abraham in paradise?

First, he will be conscious of his faithful life as a soldier of the Most High God (cf. Luke 16:19-31). (1) Very precious to him is that momentous decision to enroll as a soldier in the Lord’s army. He enrolled because he wanted to follow Christ, to be His servant, to accept His invitation. Christ needed volunteers—and he volunteered! He “gladly received his word and was baptized” (Acts 2:41).

(2) He rejoices that his loyalty was to the Captain of our salvation, the King of kings. He gave Him his whole heart; there was no divided allegiance (Deut. 6:4-5; Matt. 22:36-40). His whole life was spent in either preparing for or engaged in battle for Christ. He was not his own; he belonged totally to Christ, for he was purchased by Christ (Acts 20:28; I Cor. 6:19-20). He was clothed with a blood-washed garment (spiritually) and was fed with the milk and meat of the Word. He took his marching order from the Captain, obedient in every respect (Matt. 7:21-23; John 12:48). To do otherwise

would have meant being court-martialed for crimes of insubordination.

3. To have become entangled again in the world would have brought disaster (II Peter 2:20-22). Wonderful to him is the fact that he died to the world (Rom. 6:1-2), burning the bridges behind him. When the battle got hot and long, he had no temptation to cross back into his former lost state. Unlike Lot's wife, who looked back, he was like the faithful in Hebrews 11, seeking a permanent possession of their own.

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out (Egypt), they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly... (Heb. 11:15-16).

“No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier” (II Tim. 4:2). In New Testament times, the soldier of the Emperor was exempt (prohibited) from litigation, business, affairs, etc. Anything which would deter us from faithful service must be abandoned.

4. He remembers that had it not been for the Christian's armor, he could not have won the victory (Eph. 6:10-18); he would have been without protection from Satan's fiery darts. And, if the Christian life is not a battle, a fight, why is armor needed? Implements of war are critically and absolutely necessary, for a spiritually dead soldier is not a help but a hindrance, especially one who is lukewarm or cowardly or critical of every challenge to the enemy and charge into his territory. He remembers being in the trenches, waging the battle, encouraging the cause.

5. He is glad that he was a “**good** soldier of Jesus

Christ,” active and ready to every good work. He remembers seeking to excel, to please the Captain in every respect. He put forth every effort to grow in the knowledge and ability to meet the enemy (Heb. 5:12-14).

6. He knows that he may not have triumphed had he not been vigilant (I Cor. 16:13), as a good soldier, a watchman on the wall (Ezek. 3:17-21; 33:1-16). He is delighted that he realized that his soul and the Lord’s cause was in constant danger. Not one of God’s soldiers can let up, not one is safe from the enemy until the end of the battle (Rev. 2:10). How many does he remember who won a number of victories but did not triumph in the end?

7. He thanks the Lord that the army of Christ undergoes a rigorous training regime. What nation sends untrained soldiers into battle? Be assured that Satan and his soldiers are prepared. Very much time is spent in training soldiers, so it is in the Lord’s army. Would you wish your son to go into battle unprepared—the height of folly? The rewarded soldier treasures up the time spent in Bible classes, worship assemblies, leadership training, etc. Thank God for the local congregation and for competent elders who see to it that God’s people are fortified for battle! And, indispensable is a great Bible knowledge (Eph. 6:17)! He who is not well trained shall fall on the field of battle, slain by his mortal enemy, Satan.

8. His mind cannot help but go back to the great heritage and tradition of God’s army. Often, the patches worn by certain divisions in a regiment depict victories/glories of the past. God’s soldier finds encouragement from such worthies as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David,

Esther, Deborah, Paul, et al. (Rom. 15:4; Heb. 11; 12:1-2). They joyfully sacrificed, even taking beatings and going to their death for the Cause, what a noble lineage! Today, dear Christian, we stand on the shoulders and enjoy the fruits of the labors of many great, courageous, stalwart men and women of God. How dare some neophyte blaspheme their memory! Such an one is not worthy to wear the colors.

9. What a blessing it was for him to undergo great self-sacrifice for his King! He remembers having counted the cost before following Christ. Christ warned that His soldiers would be hated, persecuted, maligned, and killed, perhaps (Matt. 10; cf. 8:19-22). The soldier's having conquered his own spirit, submitting it wholly to Christ, was a part of his own victory and reward. He renounced worldly lusts, passions, and any other vile thing—and even its very appearance. And, he renounced anything in his own family which would hinder his service as a soldier (Matt. 10:34-39).

10. His joy is heightened by remembering the hardships which he endured. "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 2:3). War **always** brings suffering. One who does not endure the suffering does not have enough love for the Captain and for the Cause. We "shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). Is a loyal soldier characterized by making excuses—too far to march, too cold, too rainy, offended by another soldier, do not like the sergeant, et al? Such is rank disrespect for Christ! Think of the Japanese, who considered it a high honor to risk their lives, even die, for their cause (cf. the apostles, Acts 4:29-31). He rejoices that he sacrificed thus to defend the Cause, even at great personal sacrifice, ridicule, and persecution.

Some say that we should imitate Christ; indeed, let us sacrifice self as He did in order to contend for the faith (Jude 3). He views life as enduring hardness, dying, if necessary, in victory (Rev. 2:10). Often, Paul’s enemies were his own brethren (Gal. 4:16). Might not some of those who were crying out the loudest for Paul’s death (Acts 21:17-36) have been members of the church? Paul charged Timothy, “Suffer hardship with me!” Follow me to the front line of battle. Accompany me into the trenches. Let us look together into the whites of the eyes of the evil foe. Let us conquer in the name of the Messiah. March with me as we capture enemy territory and release the captives. Let us give up not one foot of sacred ground. Let us whet up the courage of our convictions together, for hell fire awaits the fearful! The coward, the non-sacrificing refuses to partake of the cross of Christ. “Must Jesus bear the cross alone?” (cf. Matt. 16:24). What does Christ think of the crowd (Luke 9:62; I Cor. 16:13)? The faithful soldier has ONE priority, ONE passion that rules him—to take the enemy’s territory, to drive him out, to free the captive souls. How much greater should our passion be to carry the gospel to lost humanity, to spread Christ’s spiritual kingdom, to win for our Lord! That desire must become very intense in our hearts and lives.

11. The rewarded soldier is intensely grateful for those who encouraged his obedience and his fight as the Lord’s soldier, i.e., the Spirit and the bride (Rev. 22:17; Rom. 7:4), perhaps a member of his own family, or a devoted friend. He remembers those who loved him enough to bear his burdens (Gal. 6:2) and even the fellow soldier who “converted a sinner [him, perhaps] from the error of his way” and saved his “soul from death” (James

5:19-20). He looks forward to being reunited with these special brethren.

Whereas the memory of the faithful soldier will greatly enhance his capacity to enjoy heaven, the memory of the person who refused to enlist in the Lord's army and of the unfaithful, cowardly, compromising will be haunting, unrelentingly, persecuting, and indescribably sad.

Second, all of God's faithful soldiers will share in the victory. "We shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). Traitors shall not enjoy the reward! Those who assist the enemy shall themselves be destroyed (John 12:42; Acts 1:16-25). Those who sell out are no better than Esau. There are some Benedict Arnolds, Judas Iscariots, and Esaus in the church, unfortunately. And, there are some cowardly types, lawless ones who shoot the brave, courageous, front line soldiers in the back. However, faithful soldiers realize very keenly that the battle is not over till it is over. We are not mustered out until death (Rev. 2:10).

But, then! Yes, then we shall share in the greatest victory celebration ever! We do not have to abide on earth until the last battle is fought and the smoke clears. Christ shall prevail (Rev. 19-22). We shall be on the conquering side. Then will be unadulterated joy. And, all of God's soldiers will be present, with their laurels and garlands. Unlike in physical victories mixed with tears because some of the brave soldiers were slain in battle, every faithful, loyal soldier will be celebrating the victory. Therein is comfort (I Thess. 4:13-18). The Lord never lost a battle, and He shall take care of His own.

The reunion at that day shall be marvelous indeed.

Recent days have seen fifty-year reunions of the soldiers who fought and were victorious in World War II. But, there were thoughts and prayers uttered with respect to those courageous soldiers who gave their life blood for freedom. At the heavenly reunion, not one faithful soldier will be missing from his place around God’s throne; all will be honored!

Third, the faithful shall go home. The “beautiful place called heaven,” that actual reality twice called a place in John 14:1-3, is the eternal home of the soul, so welcomed by the soldier of Christ. Wars are not generally fought at home, and soldiers get so homesick. “Home, sweet home” has graced many weary lips. When his life neared its close, Paul longed for home (II Tim. 4:6-8). Faithful Abraham saw that heavenly city through the eye of faith, as did the older saints of old (Heb. 11:10,13,16). Oh, how this world would become tarnished if we could envision the heavenly portals and our mansions there. We would fight more courageously, would we not?

Fourth, the weary soldier shall find rest in heaven. He is very weary here. Even Christ and Paul became weary at times. The flesh becomes tired. It has limitations. Up there, where flesh and blood cannot enter, we will never become weary of praising the Father and serving Him continuously. For whom is this place of rest? It is for the diligent, dedicated, active, working soldier (Heb. 4:9-11).

Fifth, the enduring soldier shall receive the crown of life. Paul looked forward to that day, the day of the Lord’s second coming, when all the faithful shall receive crowns (II Tim. 4:6-8). The winning competitor received a garland, or crown, at the Greek national

games. The Christian's crown is one of righteousness (the reward of righteousness). It is a symbol of worthiness, awarded at the judgment by the righteous Judge. The faithful will not go unrewarded (Rev. 14:13). It is the victory crown awaiting those who sacrifice to feed the hungry (James 1:27; Gal. 6:10), whose feet and bodies ache and grow weary as they carry the gospel to their neighbors and to the whole world (Matt. 28:19-20), whose minds grow tired from constant study and writing to enable others to hear the Word, whose spirits sometimes are hurt by the lashing, cutting tongues of the very brethren and friends whom they are trying to lead home to glory, et al. The eternal treasures in heaven far exceed the weariness and pain here experienced. Fellow soldiers, just think of when you "shall shine on the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:2-3)! Just think of the rest in Abraham's bosom, of receiving that "abundant entrance" into heaven and eternal rest (Luke 16; II Thess. 1:6-11; II Peter 1:11)! Read of that crown you will receive (I Peter 5:4; I Cor. 9:25).

Sixth, the rewarded soldier will rejoice that he has influenced others to receive the crown. Listen to Paul,

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy (I Thess. 2:19-20).

How many will be there because of you and me, dear reader? What a joy will be to see our families, our neighbors, and others, whom we have influenced in some way to be faithful soldiers of our Captain! How many

are those in physical battles who have seen the brave, stalwart soldiers going into the heat of battle, storming the bulwarks of the enemy, carrying the ensign and planting it and they themselves received strength for the battle! You can lead someone into battle, my friend. **YOU** have influence—others will follow, and you will rejoice eternally that **you** gave them strength and encouragement, especially those of your own family.

Seventh, we shall see Jesus! I remember hearing a friend who served under the great General George Patton speak very proudly of being once in his presence. In fact, he took a photograph of this gifted, brave warrior and leader, developed two copies of the picture, one of which he presented to the general and the other of which General Patton autographed. Greater to me than that is to have been/to be privileged to be in the presence of great, sacrificial warriors of the cross. But, our hearts long for the time when we shall see the Lord face to face. **NOTHING** can compare to that! Christ, the Savior to whom we owe so much, the Lord whom we faithfully serve, the High Priest through whom we approach the Father, the Man of Sorrows who took our stripes and healed us, the God-man who reconciled us to God, the Captain who leads us to battle and promise the crown.

Conclusion

In reality, what God has reserved for His faithful soldiers is far beyond human description and comprehension. We read of the rejoicing in heaven in the presence of the holy angels when one sinner repents (Luke 15:7). We read of Christ standing on God’s right hand when His soldier Stephen is stoned to death (Acts 7:56). We read of the angels carrying Lazarus into

Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22), and, we wonder. What ecstatic rejoicing must be going to take place when the conquering Christ carries His soldiers to the bright shores of our eternal home and as they stand in the august presence of their King and Master awaiting the placing of the victory crowns upon their heads and victory palms in their hands! May we all hear, "*Come, ye blessed...*"

Chapter 18

Soldiers Of Christ: Going “Home”

Keith A. Mosher, Sr.



Keith Mosher, Sr., a faithful proclaimer of the gospel of Christ, received his formal education from Cleveland State University, University of Louisville, and Memphis School of Preaching ~ Keith was born in Pennsylvania ~ Presently he is a full-time teacher at the Memphis School of Preaching ~ Keith and Dorothy have been married thirty years and have three children and two grandchildren.

Paul wrote,

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (II Tim. 4:6-8).

At the end of his extraordinary life, Paul longed for home; that is, he desired to be with Christ and the saints of all the ages. His “fight of faith” was over. He was battle-weary and more than ready for peace.

Secular soldiers from every historical era have, no doubt, become exhausted from war, killing and being killed, separation from loved ones, deprivation of food, sleep, and water, and the simple comforts of being home and being loved and cherished. Cries from the battlefields have ranged from the desperate dying who implore their

home as motivation enough to remain steadfast in the good fight of faith.

Heaven: The Place

Heaven, the “long home” of the faithful is a place (John 14:3; Eccl. 12:5). God the Father dwells there and one should imagine a **real place**, not a fantasy, nor an invention of man’s longings, nor a dream state, nor a “state of mind.”² The righteous can expect to inherit this home (Matt. 5:10; 6:19-20; Col. 1:5; I Peter 1:4).

This **place** is described as a city. “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10; cf. Heb. 12:22). The Bible also calls this new home a “better country” (Heb. 11:16).

Suppose that during a battle a soldier began to think of his home; but because of being tired or fearful or both, he had trouble remembering specific details of sights, smells, and surroundings. No matter, for just thinking of “home” is enough so that the soldier fights on to get there. There are not so many details about heaven in the Bible as perhaps one might want, but just knowing there is a “home” is enough. Christians fight on to get there.

Philip Melancthon, friend of Martin Luther, had to struggle with a very weak constitution all through his 64 years of life. Pain and uneasiness came to sharpen his visage, hollow his cheeks, and completely wrinkle his once handsome face. He loved to think of heaven as a place in which there would be no more contention. It was with this hope that he exhorted Peucer to cultivate peace. “Let them curse but bless thou. My soul hath dealt with

Him that hated not peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war.”³

One is not sure about Melancthon’s relationship to God, but one is sure that thoughts of home are thoughts of peace for Christian soldiers. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee” (Isa. 26:3).

But, just where is this perfect home? The Bible teaches that heaven is “up.”

It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in (Isa. 40:22).

Job wrote that God stretched out the north over the empty place and the Psalmist declared that “promotion” could not come from south, east, or west (Psm. 75:6). “Promotion” carries the idea that the decision to “lift up” comes only from God and not from sun-up to sun-down nor from mountains.⁴ God is, thus, in the “north” or “up.” Ezekiel added:

And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire (Ezek. 1:4).

Since God’s soldier is fighting a “good fight of faith” will there be room for him in heaven? Yes (John 14:2-3)! The Bible does not specifically say how large heaven is, but a city that was “four-square” was able to descend from heaven (Rev. 21:2,16). If “four-square” is a *literal* measurement, there would be 12,000 furlongs or 1500

square miles to the city (which came down *from* heaven). Such a city could contain forty-one trillion apartments! Truly, in the Father's house there are *many* mansions.

Many soldiers have died on battlefield's far from their earthly homes. They died never again to know the warmth of a mother's voice nor the pleasure of a Father's presence. In a spiritual sense, the faithful soldier of God is never far from home. His "citizenship" is *in* heaven even while on earth (Phil. 3:20).

At the beginning of Persian dominance after the seventy-years of Babylonian captivity, the prophet Daniel began to long for his Jerusalem "home" (Dan. 9:2). He began to pray and to confessing his sins and the sins of his people who were "near...and far off" (dispersed) in many nations and also away from home (Dan. 9:3-7). As Daniel continued his prayer of penitence a most unusual thing occurred—the angel Gabriel appeared (Dan. 9:20-21). Gabriel had been commanded, at the beginning of Daniel's prayer, to leave heaven and to "fly swiftly" to Daniel (Dan. 9:23,21). Daniel is told that in heaven he is "greatly beloved" (Dan. 9:23). Heaven is not far! It is *one* prayer away as fast as an angel can fly! Those who are war-torn from the battle with sin have no distance at all to travel to get home and perhaps an angel will guide them (cf. Luke 16:22).

Heaven: Other "Soldiers" Present

One in his home in heaven can expect to see **Enoch** who "...was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). **Elijah** will be present to explain his unusual "ride."

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them

both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven (II Kings 2:11).⁵

Some unusual beings also inhabit heaven—**Cherubim** and **Seraphim** (Psm. 80:1; Isa. 6:2). The **Godhead** is there also, of which more is written later in this chapter.

The faithful will be there from all ages (Heb. 11). Especially important to members of the church are the promises of I Corinthians 15:24,

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

Hebrews 12:23,

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

Revelation 6:9,

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

And Revelation 14:13,

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

An unknown author wrote:

When I was a boy I used to think of heaven as a glorious golden city, with jewelled walls and gates of pearl, with nobody in it but the angels and they were all strangers to me. But

after a while my little brother died; then I thought of heaven as that great city full of angels with just one little fellow in it that I was acquainted with. He was the only one that I knew there at the time. Then another brother died and there were two in heaven that I knew.

Then my acquaintances began to die, and the number of my friends in heaven grew larger all the time. But it was not until one of my little ones was taken that I began to feel that I had a personal interest in the home of the soul. Then a second went, and a third, and a fourth; and so many of my friends and loved ones have gone there that it seems as if I know more in heaven than I know on earth.

And now when my thoughts turn to heaven, it is not the gold and the jewels, and the pearls I think of—but the loved ones there. It is not the place so much as the company that makes heaven seem beautiful.⁶

The above sentiments from a human standpoint strike a chord with all who have loved ones in paradise. It seems that Christians should love Jesus enough for Him to be the only attraction needed in heaven, but the death of a five-month old grandson really made heaven seem more real to this writer than his previous faith had. One understands this, but one wishes that the Lord could be loved more so that, as Paul, the crown that awaits the soldier of Christ would be motivation enough (II Tim. 4:8). It takes a penitent heart to realize how much more should Christians love Christ and desire to go home to see Him! His is the peace that passes understanding (Phil. 4:7).

Heaven: Peace For A Soldier's Soul

Man is a soul and has an eternal destiny (Matt.

16:24-26). Many deny the former fact and teach non-existence at death for sinners and saints, but add that saints will be resurrected “in the millennium.”⁷ Jesus, however, said of saint and sinner that...

the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29).

The soul of man, prior to the resurrection day, is said to enter “paradise,” a place where Christ said that He and the thief would enter (Luke 23:43). However, Jesus also spoke of the “gates of hell” as no barrier to His building the church (Matt. 16:18). The term *hell* in the King James Version in Matthew 16:18 is “hades” in the original. Therefore, *paradise* is a place in the Hadean (unseen) world. It seems that paradise is equivalent to “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22). Note that the rich man was “buried,” but also was in “torment” (Luke 16:22-23). The rich man could see his counter part, Lazarus, in the other part of the Hadean realm, but could not go there (Luke 16:26). The place where rebellious angels are “kept until judgment” is labelled *tartarus* (II Peter 2:4). Perhaps the latter is the *torment* mentioned in Luke 16. The Hadean world appears to have two places for souls; one is torment and the other is paradise. As a soldier might, in going home, have to change trains or planes to get there, so the Christian soldier must wait in paradise until the resurrection and entrance into heaven. It is hardly an inconvenience! Some wonder why there is a judgment day if one “knows” he is already in paradise. Judgment day is the time for the *explanation*

of reward or punishment not the fact of it (II Cor. 5:10).

In paradise one is gathered to his people (cf. Gen. 25:8; 35:29; 49:33). The battle is over and the soldier is home. Tears cease, troubles too, and in the “land of no more” the victory is won (Rev. 21).

Some worry about recognition of loved ones in paradise and/or heaven. The rich man *knew* Lazarus and Abraham (Luke 16:23). David insisted that he *could* go to a dead son (II Sam. 12:23). Just as the veterans from Vietnam mentioned above were psychologically traumatized upon returning home to a hostile nation, how frighteningly awful would it be to go to a “paradise” where no one knew anyone else! Jesus said that faithful soldiers could “sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 3:11). How, without recognition, would one know with whom one was sitting (Heb. 11:13)? Paul wrote that he would know the Thessalonians at the second coming of Christ and John insisted that “Moses and the Lamb” not only would be recognized but also praised (I Thess. 2:19-20; Rev. 15:3).

The doctrine of “no-recognition” evidently arises from the thinking of those who can not understand how they could be “happy” in heaven’s home while knowing that some loved ones were in hell. One might ask such persons how unhappy they are right now by the thought of lost souls in hell and how much effort they are making to save them! However, thinking that happiness requires no knowledge of unhappiness is illogical and non-biblical. The idea of “going home” for the “war-weary” soldier of God presupposes that that veteran of the good fight of faith will enjoy heaven the more for having been in the battle! To *know* joy, one *must* know sorrow. For God to “wipe away all tears” means that there *are* reasons for

the tears, but the reasons will not continue to exist in heaven (Rev. 21:4). If at any time one were unable to remember, know himself, and know others, then at that moment one would cease to exist. *Eternal* life would then be a meaningless phrase. The peace for a soldier’s soul is in *knowing* that he has been through the skirmish and that it is over!

One is not told about what kind of body will be had in heaven (I Cor. 15:52-53). One is told that God’s soldiers will “be like” God’s Son (I John 3:1-3). One is not told whether babies who have died “grow” in heaven nor whether the aged remain aged. (One commentator insisted that since Christians will “be like” Christ at the resurrection every one will be re-created as a 33-year old adult! The doctrine of recognition makes such speculation facetious.) The fountain of eternal life resides in heaven (Rev. 22:1). A “thirsty” soldier, parched from the heat of war, does not care how “old” folks are at home, but only that those folks are there. In God’s paradise all is provided. Children will be allowed as well as the elderly (Matt. 19:14). And, not one knows how “old” a changed body is nor what a soul looks like. Such questions are foolish and are asked by those who are not busy enough fighting the good fight of faith (I Cor. 15:35-36).

The relationships in the Christian soldiers’ long home are higher and holier and therefore happier, just as a human residence is in comparison to a war-ravaged battlefield. Jesus said,

For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven (Matt. 22:30).

Heaven: The Soldier's Welcome From A Prince

The “Captain” of the Christian’s salvation will welcome the faithful soldier home (Matt. 25:34). One of the most exciting events will be an introduction by Christ to the Father of whom it is said no man has seen “at anytime” (John 1:18). Some wonder about John’s statement and ask who communicated with Moses on Sinai. God did *through* angels (Heb. 2:1-3). Others wonder about Isaiah’s statement that he “saw the Lord” (Isa. 6:1). John explains that the Second Person was seen (John 12:41). Christ dwells “in the light which no man can approach unto” (I Tim. 6:16). But, Christ *is* the way to the Father (John 14:6). Jesus said that God is spirit (John 4:24). One will meet that Spirit when one goes home.

One will be allowed to enter heaven by the Christ (John 5:22; II Cor. 5:10). Obedience to His message is vital to one desiring to live with Christ eternally (cf. John 6:63; 12:48) and Christians who are faithful will see Christ “as he is;” be “like him;” and “sit with” Him on His throne (Rev. 3:21). He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25-26).

One will meet the Holy Spirit there (Rev. 4:5). Perhaps then some will realize that He is a real being and not some “holy it” floating around in space (John 14:26; 16:13). Christ, perhaps, will introduce the faithful to angels, “elders, four and twenty,” and the myriad of heaven’s hosts (Rev. 4:5). The imagination soars at such lofty thoughts!

Heaven, the home of mansions fair,
here are some things that will not be there—

No sin can enter the portals fair
The vile and unclean shall not be there.
No sickness, no death, suffering or pain;
No devils, no demons can entrance gain;
No darkness, no night, woe or despair,
No cares or heavy burdens to bear.
No disappointments in that fair land,
No tears or sighs on the Golden Strand;
No fears of evil, our peace to annoy;
Nothing to hurt, mar or destroy;
No heartache or grief, no not a trace.
Will ever be found in that holy place;
Yea, fairer than mortals here have known,
Are the things God has prepared for His own.

Heaven, the place so wondrously fair,
Here are some things that WILL be there—
God’s throne where the saved prostrate fall,
Jesus the Savior, the fairest of all!
Saints of all ages, lovers of God,
All who have been washed in the blood.
Loved ones and friends, dear to our hearts
Will meet in that land, never more to part;
Children of every race will be seen,
Joyful and happy, in the fields of green.
Amid the flowers that never fade,
Gorgeous colors that never shade;
The river of life and the street of gold,
The beauties of heaven can never be told.
Such beautiful singing on earth is not heard
Nor can be described by pen or word,
Companionship with all the blest, perfect love
and perfect peace,
Perfect love and perfect rest, forever more,
free from all strife;
Everlasting joy—eternal life.
Yes, more than mortal have ever known
Are the things that God has prepared for His own.⁸

This writer heard the late Foy E. Smith, faithful soldier of Christ, say on one occasion that one day the Father would say to the Son: "Son, I am lonely. Go back near earth and get my family and bring them home" (cf. Eph. 5:23). Such a thought sent the proverbial "chills" down the spine! Going home to God! Going home to peace!

Conclusion

It is a fight here to be faithful, even though God is for the Christian soldier.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith...because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world (I John 5:4; 4:4b).

But, the rewards of endurance as a good soldier are beyond the mind of man to fathom. The Christ, before He died, simply commended His spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46). Jesus did not seem to need to know nor to do anything else. If God is there what more is needed? Milton wrote,

A deathlike sleep, A gentle wafting to immortal life, Truth shall retire bestruck with sland'rous darts and works of faith rarely be found. And to the faithful, Death the **gate of life.**⁹

It is a battle, but, oh, the reward!

It is a small matter to get ready for the war against evil (Eph. 6:12ff). One hears the gospel and obeys (Mark 16:15-16). However, it is then that the enemy (Satan, evil) begins to advance (II Tim. 3:12). Do not quit, dear Christian soldier for *home* is just ahead. With brother Tillit S. Teddlie let us say,

Out on the hill of that wonderful country,
Happy, contented and free;
Loved ones are waiting and watching my coming,
Heaven holds all to me.

Endnotes

1 Author unknown, “Think of,” in **Christian Woman** (August, 1959); 4.

2 See William Hordern, **A Layman’s Guide to Protestant Theology** (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., revised ed. 1978) and Carl F.H. Henry, **Frontiers in Modern Theology: A Critique of Current Theological Trends** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966) for overviews of present thought on heaven and hell.

3 Herbert Lockyer, **Last Words of Saints and Sinners** (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1975), 73.

4 William Wilson, “Promote,” in **Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies** (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing, Co., n.d.), 329-30).

5 A modernistic professor once said in one of my classes that such a trip into outer space would freeze one within five miles and, therefore, the Bible record of Elijah was either a hyperbole or error. I laughed. Why? I suddenly realized why the chariot was “on fire!”

6 No author, “Stairway to Heaven,” in **Christian Woman** (August, 1959); 8.

7 **Let God Be True**, “Hell, A Place of Rest in Hope” (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Inc., 1946), 88-89.

8 Author unknown, “Heaven,” in **Christian Woman**, (August, 1959), 30-31.

9 Lockyer, **Last Words of Saints and Sinners**, 22.

Chapter 19

Victory Within Reach

Gary Colley



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Among the sweetest words in the vocabularies of men is the word **victory**. Victory is a word known to all, but not always with regularity enjoyed by all! There may be however, different areas and degrees in which each may have known victory. But all have either seen it in others, experienced it themselves, or desired to see it in life.

Defining Victory Now

The word victory “implies the winning of a contest or struggle of any kind (a victory in battle, in sports, etc.)” (**Webster’s New World Dictionary: College Edition**, p. 1625). It has to do with final and complete supremacy or superiority in battle or war, where triumph is finally known. The defeat of an opponent in bringing them under complete control, or the overcoming of obstacles in any contest or struggle, is known as victory. It may be said in another sense, that one enjoys victory

by exemplifying outstanding mental feats, an unwillingness to give up any endeavor through decisive character, as in the discovery of new medicines, or overcoming a disease.

All “winners” are greatly admired though it may be for many varied reasons; but the most admired is the one who has exercised steadfast stamina to overcome great difficulties, whatever they may be, to finally win the victory!

Heroes

The ones who have overcome great odds to achieve the pinnacle of victory are generally considered heroes. They stand out in the thinking and admiration of all. We award these thoughts and a special place in our thinking to those who simply would not give up under the severest of circumstances, and who finally won. We cannot help but count these as our heroes! We look with admiration, pleasure, and approval at their nobility, strength, qualities, achievements, exploits, and courage, desiring to model our own lives in their ideals and determination. Their example causes us to press on much further in our own efforts of life than perhaps we would ordinarily have done to reach the goal! Very likely we will want to look like, talk like, walk like, and act in the same manner in which our hero has performed!

We need heroes in this life to stir and excite us to use our God-given talents in the best way possible! It is an evident fact that one is weaker, and in some cases to be pitied, who has no heroes whom he admires and that urge him on to victory.

The Power Of Example

The Almighty God knew, above, beyond, and before

any other, the power of example for both good and bad! We should follow the good examples of the Bible to instruct, energize, and help us in our lives. For this cause we cannot help but notice the importance of heroes in the Old Testament as well as the New Covenant! Since our trials, sufferings, difficulties, and struggles will not generally be different from those before us, and that “history repeats itself” is true, oh, how we need these heroes to benefit us in every relationship of life, making clear our needed course, to invigorate us, and make our lives more complete. Paul and Peter state:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man... (I Cor. 10:13).

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you (I Peter 4:12).

Surely many of us will be robbed of our highest potential, enjoyment, and happiness if we cannot see the need and importance of heroes, in the home, the church, the nation, and the world. Without them, the victory may be in jeopardy! We need to follow the lead of those who made it their rule in life to hear God, never doubt Him, do what He says, as we trust Him for the promises (Eccl. 12:13).

Some Old Testament Heroes

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Heb. 11:7).

What a beautiful, impressive example! God was the architect while Noah, who had never seen such rain or flood as God warned about, was the worker “by faith.” The gathering of the “gopher wood,” following exactly the blueprint of God’s instructions, and the construction of the prepared pieces together for the beam, door, and window, were all acts of faith!

Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he (Gen. 6:5-8, 14-16, 22).

Notice that Noah was not an “heir of righteousness” until he built the ark by faith! His faith was certainly a working faith, not a dead faith that refused to act! As Noah heard and did what God commanded to gain his victory, so must we hear and do all that Christ, the Son of God, commands today to gain our victory (Matt. 7:21-27; Heb. 1:1-2)! What a giant of a man and hero was Noah! Because of the flood destroying the all of the disobedient earthly inhabitants, except Noah and the seven other souls of his family, all today owe their lives to his faithfulness and find a common ancestor in him! We have every assurance, from this example of one man’s obedience and God’s faithfulness, that the promises of God today are sure and to be trusted (I Peter 3:21).

Abraham

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went (Heb. 11:8).

During the Patriarchal dispensation God spoke directly to the fathers of the families. They were the

prophet, priest, and king of the family, to communicate God's will. While the command to Noah affected all of the known world at that time, God's command to Abraham would affect the nation of Israel as well as ultimately all the nations of the earth through Christ (Gen. 12:1-3; Gal. 3:16). Little do any of us realize how far reaching our example of faithfulness today may be! We note that Abraham's faith also was an obedient faith! He did not go by feeling, human reasoning, or his own thinking, since all of these things would stand against anyone beginning such a journey. But God spoke, and Abraham obeyed! It was God leading and Abraham walking by faith. "He went out, not knowing whither he went," means that he could see neither where he was going nor the end of the journey! But he went. And every step of the 1200 mile trip was a step of obedient faith!

We are commanded to follow his example. God proclaimed Abraham to be the father of all the faithful (Rom. 4:11-12). In showing that all are saved in the same manner under the gospel, and that God now placed no difference in the Jew or Gentile insofar as becoming righteous by obedience to Christ, Paul said,

...who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised (Rom. 4:12).

What heroic faith was further demonstrated by Abraham in the offering of his son Isaac! If only human sight or reasoning was involved, few if any then or now would have so trusted and obeyed as did Abraham! No wonder he was called the "friend for ever of God" (II Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23). Our friendship with

God is obtained in the same manner today, when we obey the voice of His Son (John 14:15,21,23; 15:14). The impassioned words of Genesis 22:1-5, for Abraham to take...

...thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of (Gen. 22:2).

Such would certainly show the supreme test of Abraham's faith! Without faith in God, parental love, along with logical questions about how God would keep “the promise” without Isaac as the seed, might have caused a negative response with every excuse thinkable! But Abraham's strong unfaltering faith sustained him! Whether he might have argued that Isaac was a child of old age, the child of promise, or that the scheme of redemption would fail, Abraham did not, nor did his faith falter! Please, dear reader, read with care Hebrews 11:17-19, and see his faith reigning supreme. This is God's example, unlike man's, of how one is justified by faith (James 2:21-24).

Moses

None are greater on God's honor roll of the heroes of faith than Moses. How we thrill to see the account of Moses faith, preceded by the faith of his godly parents Amram and Jochebed (Heb. 11:23-29), which resulted in all of this family receiving the “wages” of obedience to God! This may only be compared perhaps to the unfeigned faith of Timothy, Paul's beloved son and companion, because of greatness of his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (II Tim. 1:5). To all parents we would

say: Take close attention to the first impressions in the life of your child, knowing that they may end up being the last and most lasting ones, even through eternity (Eph. 6:4).

Moses' faith caused his wise choices to be made from a godly standpoint instead of the worldly. Though he was well educated by the Egyptians, being "mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22), he exchanged the honor, wealth, sensual pleasures, and future rule of an earthly kingdom to be a part of the oppressed, enslaved, and despised people of God! He realized with the great man Job, that "the triumphing of the wicked is short...the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment" (Job 20:5). Thus, his heroic faith worked for him a place in honor roll of the blessed of God! We should follow his example of choosing God's way over the way of the world, in order that God may choose us to be "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him" (James 2:5; Matt. 6:19-21).

Our Spiritual Victory

For the sober thinking person, the sweetest of all victories is not found in the physical realm of worldly affairs, but rather in the spiritual strength of an humble and faithful soldier in the Lord's army. So many obstacles have stood in the path of the strong devoted men and women of the past! But we have been blessed to see the Bible declaring throughout its pages that many of them have overcome and won the victory! What courage we receive from these outstanding examples! Though our challenges, circumstances, and temptations may not be exactly the same as others, there are always likenesses from which we may draw strength in the "mountains"

we face and which they overcame for victory. We must not draw back in fear and fail to meet the challenge of those obstacles, that stand to be overcome in the way of men and women living a life of fidelity as Christians!

“Accept No Substitutes”

No individual can enjoy the victory over this world who is unwilling to join forces with the Captain of our salvation and wage the war in which He directs us (I John 5:4). Just as the runner cannot win the garland of victory if he refuses to enter the race and cast off every weight that might bring him to fail, so we must become Christians through obeying the conditions of pardon, laying aside sin, and “run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1-3). In God’s service there is nothing greater than obedience and no substitute for victory! Having submitted ourselves to the service of Christ (Rom. 6:16-18), there is then no middle ground of independence in the service of our Lord. Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me” (Matt. 12:30).

Worldly Snares

There is no substitute for victory over the flesh. The apostle Paul pictured the wretched, dead in sin man as wrestling with the flesh and really desiring a better life both morally and spiritually (Rom. 7:18-23). As he struggled in his warfare with the flesh the sinner feels himself to be a split personality as if two minds were trying for ascendancy! Paul by inspiration considered the sinner as a walking civil war! But Paul also revealed the only hope for victory over the flesh was through Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:24-25).

Our Adversary

There is no substitute of victory over the devil! Peter pictures Satan as our worst enemy and against whom all of our resistance must be exercised. Some have learned all too late that one cannot afford to be chummy with a lion! He calls us to attention as soldiers when he says,

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world (I Peter 5:8-9).

A Place Of Refuge

James adds, by inspired interest for our safety, that we are to:

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded (James 4:7-8).

In the constant battle waged by the sinner with the world, the flesh, and the devil, we should rejoice in the refuge to be found in Christ and that the victory can be won! Let all enlist in the army of the Lord by obedience to the gospel, in faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, so that our strength may be sufficient for the battle (Phil. 4:13)! Though we may be at one time in our life “taken captive” of Satan, let us escape through the greatest power ever known to man, the gospel (Rom. 1:16). We can be “delivered...from the power of darkness,” and be “translated into the kingdom of his dear Son”

(Col. 1:13). Christians can say with Paul,

Now thanks be unto God, which always
causeth us to triumph in Christ... (II Cor.
2:14).

Steadfastness Worketh Hope

From God’s Word we learn that with every temptation we overcome we are stronger to meet the next! As spiritual strength grows and conviction is established, hope grows brighter (Rom. 5:3-4). Hope is the substance, under-girding, of the things hoped for, or the victory we seek (Heb. 11:1). Thus we realize, that in any moral or spiritual issue, it is either right or wrong, true or false, saved or lost, Heaven or Hell. In this life the Lord affords us many small victories, which serve as a foretaste of the sublime victory of Heaven.

Solomon And Paul’s Helpful Advice

The wise man Solomon gave excellent advice for us when we are striving for the victory of victories:

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and
lean not unto thine own understanding. In all
thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct
thy paths (Prov. 3:5-6).

We must, if we would insure ourselves of the victory of Heaven, walk in Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:1-6). We cannot compromise with the devil if we want the victory! Knowing this, Paul exhorted the faltering Corinthians, in the summation of the first letter to them, to,

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like
men, be strong. Let all your things be done
with charity (I Cor. 16:13-14).

We must not think, as did the ancient Israelites, who were warned against practicing compromise and union with the heathens, that we can ignore God's command to "come ye out" from among our denominational or idolatrous neighbors in order that we may truly be His sons and daughters (II Cor. 6:17-18), while expecting the Lord to help us to victory! "Peace" cannot be the first consideration in the war against error and sin, especially when the enemy is still thumbing his nose at God and His people! The favor and glory of God are seen only in those who continue in His will. John writes,

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (II John 9-11).

Victory Is Within Reach!

How wonderful to hear Christians sing "Soldiers of Christ arise, and put your armour on!" And, of the "victory in Jesus," through the knowledge of the joy and hope that our Saviour brings to our hearts! Paul touchingly wrote,

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (II Cor. 5:1).

Through the eye of faith, we too are able to see the Promised Land! Peter assures us of our...

“Victory Within Reach”

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (I Peter 1:3-5).

He speaks of this time of victory as “receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (I Peter 1:9). Hence, thus it shall be, just beyond the Jordon of death, where our armour, honor, and gratitude for guidance shall be placed at His feet, and we will sing through the endless ages “the song of Moses and the Lamb” which will be the final song of eternal victory.

Fifth Annual

TRUTH IN LOVE LECTURESHIP



Theme:
*“Soldiers Of Christ,
Arise”*

Section V:
**Women’s
Lesson**

Chapter 20

God's Enlisted Woman

Maggie Colley

Introduction

Deborah, the servant of God, is one of the best examples of an encourager found in the Bible. She stated her confidence in God to Barak when he was shrinking before the forces of Sisera and Jabin's army.

And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee?

Our Service To God

Like Deborah, our being enlisted as a soldier in the army of the Lord is not new to the godly woman. When we become Christians by faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, we are a part of the greatest army ever known. Our war is against Satan! Our march is toward heaven!

But, we must do more than wear the name. When one joins the ranks as a soldier, he is given an identifying name and uniform to wear, and the necessary weapons to use in battle. We, as Christians, definitely have a battle to fight. We need to know the purpose of

our mission, uses of our defenses, the reasons are for our armour, and how to use the sword of the Spirit. We need to appreciate their worth; and in the battle for truth, we must learn to use these articles furnished by God skillfully. Paul gave the answer to many of the problems now facing us when he wrote, “It is high time to awake out of sleep...” (Rom. 13:11). Indolence and lethargy will never cause us to win the battle. Again Paul exhorts,

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil...Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:10-11, 14-17).

Women’s Changing Roles

There are many women in our world today, the latter part of the 20th century, that are influential in every level of government, education, and almost any profession one could name. Recently, their role in the military service has been discussed at length by the leaders of our government, and women are now allowed to participate in combat in the United States military engagements!

As we now clearly see, there have been many changes in the women of America in the last two

generations. Various women's organizations claim to be the cause, (though we may say blame) including the Women's Liberation Movement. They have moved so fast and so powerfully that many false ideas have been advanced and their agenda accomplished as "women's rights" have evolved. These ideas have been received with tremendous success among women, even in many instances been evident in pervading the thinking of women in the Lord's church, who should know better. Because of these false ideas which are opposite from the Bible's teaching, we as older godly women need more than in any period of history to be diligently teaching the principles Paul instructed Titus to teach (Titus 2:3-5).

"Go Home, Ladies!"

Women are leaving their God intended roles to be "keepers at home," which is leading to the neglect of their children and marriage, and have set their priorities above these important matters to pursue worldly success and power. This has led in many instances to the moral decline in the home, the school, the nation, and even in the church.

Since these changes are so apparent, and many are now wondering what happened to the family, we must begin to restore what has been lost! Just as the rediscovery and restoration of God's Old Testament Law to Israel, which had been lost and resulted in causing them to depart from God's will, so today many have lost the original blueprint for a successful and happy life. Israel's finding God's law caused them to once again read, reclaim, and thus restore righteousness to their lives in the days of Josiah (II Chron. 34:15). We too

must return in our day to reading, studying, and imbibing God’s New Testament law, in order to find the pattern for godly women today (Rom. 8:1-2; 12:1-2).

In doing this there will be restored to our lives and times the happy homes in which the Word of God is taught, respected, and obeyed and by which our children will once again go out into the world equipped to lead godly, wholesome, and productive lives (Prov. 22:6). Our children will have a standard to go by, and will be able to choose for themselves what is right and wrong, having been taught to follow God’s infallible guide (Psm. 119:105).

What If We Do Not Hear And Obey?

The sad results of not having and following the Word of God has, and always will, bring to us and our loved ones **spiritual decay from within** (Gal. 6:7-8). Again, let us consider the results in Israel when they turned their backs on God:

And the children of Israel again did evil in
the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead
(Judges 4:1).

What a tragic statement! Yet it is said time after time about God’s people through the ages. It all began when the people left the Lord by leaving the precepts of His law.

Idolatry Predicted

In the early life of the Hebrew nation, while they were yet on the east side of the Jordan, Moses, before his death prophesied their worship of idol gods. He predicted that they would in rebellion to God, bow down before “the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which

neither see, nor hear, nor smell.”

God had commanded the children of Israel to drive the idolatrous inhabitants from the land, but they did not obey Him. The main reason they fell from God’s favor was that “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

Deborah Arises!

One of the most courageous women of all times was Deborah. In her devotion to God, she was an outstanding wife, mother, prophetess, poetess, singer and leader in Israel. Her life changed things for good by her actions in allowing God to work through her. When the men would not take the leadership as they should have done, she, under the appointment of God, changed the course of an entire nation.

And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel (Judges 4:3).

God Hears Their Cry

God heard the pitiful cries of His people. It was then that He chose as their leader the woman named Deborah. She was the fourth judge of Israel. In this period of the Judges, Israel was suffering from spiritual decay and was crumbling before her very eyes, as she sat under her palm tree between Ramah and Bethel. People came from over all the land to this “mother of Israel” for advice and counsel, during the dark days of slavery. She served not only in religious affairs, but also in civil affairs. God made known His will to her.

Deborah’s Family

Deborah was the wife of Lappidoth. We know nothing further about this man. We wonder why her husband could not have been used to save the children of Israel from utter destruction. Though we do not know the answer, we do know that Deborah was the woman of the hour, God’s **Enlisted Woman!**

Call To Action!

Deborah was in a position to know people who would best serve in the battle that was about to ensue. She sent for “Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-Naphtali” (Judges 4:6). When Barak arrived, Deborah delivered God’s message to him. He was told to gather 10,000 men of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun and march toward Mount Tabor to meet the chariots of Jabin commanded by Sisera. God promised victory that day to Barak and his little army.

“If Thou Wilt Go With Me, Then I Will Go!”

And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh (Judges 4:8-9).

A Mother In Israel Arose!

Deborah burned with indignation toward the enemies of God who brought the oppression upon her

people. She felt a call of duty to rise up against such fear and complacency upon the part of Israel. She carried in her heart the great hope that God would come to her people's rescue, and trusted that He would if they would honor Him. Indolence and negligence were abounding: but not in Deborah, who felt the urgency to do something to turn the tide!

Not only Barak, but the entire army was encouraged and inspired by this godly woman. She was the woman of her time, doing and serving in whatever field she saw an opportunity. Deborah was ready to go with Barak. Her faith in God so filled her heart there was no room for fear of Sisera and his nine hundred chariots.

Is Not The Lord Gone Out Before Thee?

And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet (Judges 4:14-15).

Deborah, with the assurances of Jehovah, was an example of strength and inspiring to the army of Israel! Sisera ran for his life and managed to reach the tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite. Because the Kenites had been at peace with Sisera, he thought that here he would be safe. Jael was very hospitable and offered him warm

milk, after which he promptly fell asleep. It was then, in her bravery, that she took a peg which her husband had used to stretch the tent ropes on the ground, and with a hammer drove it into Sisera’s temples.

Barak found Sisera dead in Jael’s tent. No doubt he remembered the words that were spoken earlier by Deborah,

...for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman...So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel (Judges 4:9,23).

“To God Be The Glory”

Deborah took no credit to herself. She and Barak joined in the singing of the song she had composed. This “Song of Deborah” is said to be a masterpiece in literature. It was a song of praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord God of Israel. She took none of the honor unto herself.

In every line of the song one senses Deborah’s extreme devotion to God and to the well-being of her nation. At the end of the song, her courageous voice sounds forth with a freedom ring because her people are no longer enslaved. Now with her they could declare,

So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years (Judges 5:31).

“Awake, Awake!”

We, as Christian women of the nineties likely will never be called upon to pursue 900 chariots of iron and

conquer a heathen nation, but we need to be awakened to the moral decay parading itself within our nation and world, and know that it will bring internal decay and destruction to all whom it touches! We have a battle to fight today that is perhaps even greater and far more powerful.

As we have previously mentioned, the Bible role of women is being ignored and presents to us the needed point of attack today. Because the Feminist movement has so infiltrated women and their thinking, both in the church and the world, every day these changes are becoming more apparent.

Deborah Did Not Seek Authority For Herself

Remember, Deborah taught Barak his duty; she was his helper through ***teaching and encouragement!*** Nowhere did she usurp authority over God or man. Through her counsel and aid, she assisted Barak in going to battle with the enemy, and to her honor she kept herself in the background. Women who love the Lord and long to be well pleasing in His sight strive to know God's purpose and plan for her life, and to stay within those limitations.

Like Deborah who was a deliverer of her people in the turbulent period when her people were both complacent and hopeless, our families need to find in us a source of courage, faith, and strength, as we give our energies to upholding the authority of Christ (Matt. 28:18).

Our God Given Role

We too shall be victorious if we realize that our

role as Christian women is, under the authority of Christ, a supportive role to our husbands, realizing we were created to be a “help-meet” (Gen. 2:18). This is the Bible reason for our very existence!

We are commanded to appreciate and obey God’s chain of authority (I Cor. 11:3).

Our role is one of service (Rom. 6:16-18). This role begins with an attitude of submission. To be a servant means one who voluntarily dedicates himself to the service of another.

The truly great women mentioned in the Bible, as Deborah, were women who served. Not like the woman of today who has the worldly vision of power, dominance, and prestige. But rather the godly woman has the agenda of being a servant! Submission to God implies an entire giving up of our will and embracing His will (Matt. 16:24-26). We should strive to:

- a. Forget self ~ look at the Saviour.
- b. Forget my agenda ~ look at His.
- c. Forget position ~ concentrate on others and their needs.
- d. Leave the world’s Feminists views of “freedom” and find real freedom that is in Christ.

The leadership revealed in the Bible has been given to the man, and he is to exercise that leadership in the home, the church, and in the activities having to do with worship to God (Eph. 5:23; I Cor. 14:34-35).

Conclusion

If we today would, like Deborah, awaken to the present need of our responsibilities as Christian women, to heed Paul’s words as given in Titus 2:3-5,

The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

...we can restore the home and church that God intended.

Deborah's glorious victory is best recorded in this concluding, and very meaningful thought, "***And the land had rest forty years***" (Judges 5:31).