

Onward Christian Soldiers

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

Introduction: 2Tim. 2:1-4

- A. Memorial Day and Independence Day are coming within a few months. We will remember the many soldiers who gave life and limb for our freedoms, one of which is our freedom to express our faith in Christ without fear of government intervention. That freedom has been purchased and maintained over the centuries by American soldiers.
- B. The Bible presents the Christian life as that of being a soldier of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. We do not fight material enemies or physical warfare; rather this metaphor speaks of the commitment, discipline, and devotion required to live for Jesus in this world.
 - 2. To be a Christian is to be obedient to the Commander, the Captain of our Salvation, Jesus Christ.
 - 3. "During the War Between the States", writes Gary Redding, "a Union soldier from Ohio was shot in the arm during of the battle of Shiloh. His captain saw he was wounded and barked an order: 'Gimme your gun, private, and get to the rear!' The private handed over his rifle and ran toward the north, seeking safety. But after covering two or three hundred yards, he came upon another skirmish. Then he ran to the east and into another part of the battle. Then he ran west but encountered more fighting there. Finally, he ran back to the front lines, shouting: 'Gimme back my gun, cap'n. There ain't no rear to this battle!' When it comes to spiritual warfare, 'there ain't no rear!'" [Preaching, Apr/May, 1990.]
 - 4. There is no place for us to hide behind the lines in the war taking place on a spiritual level.
- C. What is the intent of the military language in the scriptures when discussing the Christian life? There are seven truths related to this subject.

I. THE CALLING OF A GOOD SOLDIER

- A. A good soldier pleases his commanding officer - 2Tim. 2:4
- B. A good soldier is called and appointed - John 15:16

II. THE COMMANDER OF A GOOD SOLDIER

- A. A good soldier's commanding officer earned the right to be obeyed - Heb. 2:10
- B. What does a good soldier do?
 - 1. A good soldier knows who is in charge.
 - 2. A good soldier does what he is commanded to do.
 - 3. A good soldier honors his commitment to his commander.
 - 4. A good soldier does not take advice from sources other than his commanding officer.
 - 5. A good soldier remains at his post in life and in death - John 15:10
- C. On one occasion while Sir Henry Brackenbury was a military attaché in Paris, he was conversing with the distinguished statesman Gambetta, who said to him, "In these days there are only two things a good soldier needs to know. He must know how to march, and he must know how to shoot!" The Englishman quickly responded, "I beg

your pardon, Excellency, but you have forgotten the most important thing of all!" The Frenchman asked, "What's that?" Brackenbury replied, "He must know how to obey!"

III. THE COMMITMENT OF A GOOD SOLDIER

- A. A soldier takes a vow, a pledge to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America and to defend the nation against all enemies, domestic and foreign. Likewise, the believer pledges to follow our Captain and to stand for Him at all times - 2Tim. 2:3-4; Eph. 6:10-11; John 15:19-21

IV. THE CONDITIONING OF A GOOD SOLDIER

- A. 1Tim. 4:8, 15; 2Tim. 3:16-17
- B. The Christian life is not easy and is frequently uncomfortable. To live as a Christian is to be un-loved by the world, and sometimes not even fully loved by other Christians.

V. THE COMRADES OF A GOOD SOLDIER

- A. A good soldier must take into consideration his fellow soldiers; those who share battle and spill blood become brothers for life.
 - 1. Phil. 2:25; Heb. 11:25
 - 2. What about a fallen comrade in arms? - Gal. 6:1-2; 1Thes. 5:14
- B. During the Boer War (1899-1902), a man was convicted of a very unusual crime. He was found guilty of being a discourager. The South African town of Ladysmith was under attack, and this traitor would move up and down the lines of soldiers who were defending the city and do everything he could to discourage them. He would point out the enemy's strength, the difficulty of defending against them, and the inevitable capture of the city. He didn't use a gun in his attack. It wasn't necessary. His weapon was the power of discouragement.

VI. THE CONFLICT OF A GOOD SOLDIER

- A. Our war is not with flesh and blood but with our Adversary and all those with him. This is a real battle not an imaginary one - Eph. 6:10-12.
- B. "When a Moslem makes a religious pilgrimage to Mecca, he kisses the Black Stone (the stone that supposedly came down from heaven), drinks from the well of Hagar, and throws stones at the three pillars that represent Satan. No doubt Satan is more amused than offended. Certainly he is not wounded. If we want to do battle with evil, we will have to do more than throw stones at pillars. We will have to live holier lives and help others to do the same." (Robert Shannon).

VII. THE CULMINATION OF A GOOD SOLDIER

- A. Paul was a great soldier - 2Tim. 4:7-8; Gal. 6:9
- B. One soldier wrote: "I can remember the day I boarded a plane from Vietnam heading back home to my family. I was married and had a daughter who was just two years of age. My heart rate increased and my joy was indescribable as I neared home. What a delight it was. If I had not served my country in an honorable way, my homecoming certainly would have been shameful. Yet, having served honorably, I felt such happiness to finally be going home to my wife and daughter. One day, we are

going to meet Jesus. Let us serve faithful now as soldiers of our Lord so that our home-going will be one of incredible joy!"

Conclusion

- A. A preacher from a past generation said, "Some want to live within the sound of chapel bells; I want to build a church within a yard of the entrance to hell!"
- B. Too many are looking to the church to meet their every need and provide them with every comfort, but let me assure you that it is our duty to be faithful to Jesus and to endure hardness for Him.

"Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize and sailed thru bloody seas?"