

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

You Are Soldiers of the Cross

II Timothy 2:1-4

1 You are soldiers of the cross. 2

Where do we get the idea that Christians are soldiers?

3

Philippians, chapter 2, verse 25 says, *But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.* 4 Also, in Philemon, verse 2, . . . to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home. . . 5

If you are called by God to be soldiers of the cross, what does that mean? 6

Our scripture today from Second Timothy, chapter 2, verses 1 through 4, tell us, *You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as*

a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer. ⁷

First of all . . .

I. You Were Enlisted!

You were enlisted. ⁸

How did God enlist soldiers in the Bible?

Numbers, chapter 1, verse 1 through chapter 2, verse 34 tell us. ⁹ **Men only were conscripted.** They had to be **twenty years old and older.** ¹ ¹⁰

In Deuteronomy, chapter 20, verses 5 through 8, however, gave **certain exemptions from military service.** These may surprise you. ¹¹

Those who built a new house but hadn't dedicated it. ²
¹² Those who planted a vineyard but had not tasted its fruit. ³ ¹³

¹ Numbers 1:3 - You and Aaron are to number by their divisions all the men in Israel twenty years old or more who are able to serve in the army.

² Deuteronomy 20:5 - Has anyone built a new house and not dedicated it? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else may dedicate it.

Those engaged to be married. ⁴ ₁₄

Those were afraid to go into battle. ⁵

Basically, it seemed, you were not fit for service if you had your focus on the things of this world instead of the battle for God! ₁₅

So, how **does God enlist soldiers of the cross?** ₁₆

God enlists you when you surrender your life to His authority and, in obedience to Him, are baptized. ⁶ ₁₇

Then, He gives you the Great Commission found in Matthew, chapter 28, verses 18 through 20, **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have**

³ Deuteronomy 20:6 - Has anyone planted a vineyard and not begun to enjoy it? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else enjoy it.

⁴ Deuteronomy 20:7 - Has anyone become pledged to a woman and not married her? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else marry her.

⁵ Deuteronomy 20:8 - Is any man afraid or fainthearted? Let him go home so that his brothers will not become disheartened too.

⁶ Acts 2:38 - **Repent and be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age. ¹⁸

You are not fit for service, however, if you put your hand to the plow and then look back. Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” ⁷ ¹⁹

You must focus on pleasing your Lord, your Commander-in-Chief! No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer. ⁸ ²⁰

II. The Lord Armed You Sufficiently!

The Lord armed you sufficiently! ²¹

This is found in Ephesians, chapter 6, verses 10 through 18.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is

⁷ Luke 9:62.

⁸ II Timothy 2:4.

not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ⁹ ₂₂

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. ¹⁰ ₂₃

⁹ Ephesians 6:10-13.

¹⁰ Ephesians 6:14-18.

First, verse 10, **Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power**. The Lord provided you, first, with His mighty power, His heavy artillery! This is His Holy Spirit within you. ²⁴

When you repent of your sins and are baptized, you are indwelt with His Holy Spirit. Acts, chapter 2, verse 38, **Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. ²⁵ His Holy Spirit gives each of you the power to live the Christian life victoriously - but not perfectly! ²⁶

What did God arm you with to succeed in spiritual combat? ²⁷



The belt of truth, verse 14, Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, . . . The truth of the gospel convicts you to live a life of truthfulness and integrity. 28



The breastplate of righteousness, verse 14, . . . with the breastplate of righteousness in place, . . . You are made righteous because of the cross, but you remain

righteous through repentance and confession of your
sins. ¹¹ 29



Your **ammunition** is found in verse 15, . . . with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. The gospel of peace prepares you. ³⁰



The shield of faith is found in verse 16, . . . take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the

¹¹ I John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

flaming arrows of the evil one. When you really trust God with your life, the fiery arrows of temptation can be quenched! ³¹



The helmet of salvation is in verse 17, **Take the helmet of salvation . . .** Your assurance of salvation gives you purpose and dignity in your life. He who is conscious of his status before Almighty God should never have a low self esteem! ³²



The sword of the Spirit, in verse 17, **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**. This is God's word, the Bible. Saturate your mind and heart with it because it is your weapon in spiritual warfare! ³³

The combat arena is your mind and heart! When Lord Jesus went into combat with Satan, He overcame temptations with the memorized word of God! Matthew, chapter 4, verses 1 through 11 give us a blow-by-blow account. ³⁴

Temptation # 1 - Satan's temptation is in verse 3, **If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread. Make Your earthly ministry one of social welfare**. Look at all the poverty in this world. You have the miraculous power to do something about that. Do you think the Lord was tempted? I bet He was! ³⁵

The Lord's answer is in verse 4, **It is written: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"**. ¹² **Discipleship means eternal priority over temporary concerns of this life.**

¹² A quotation from Deuteronomy 8:3.

Feeding the hungry is a valid way of showing Christian love to those who are in need. But its main purpose is to share in Jesus' name to prepare people for their journey to eternal life in heaven - not just to feed empty stomachs. ³⁶

Temptation # 2 - Satan's temptation is in verses 5 and 6, "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down". **Make Your earthly ministry a miraculous spectacle.** Astonish people with Your unlimited miraculous might! Spend all your time on earth displaying your marvelous signs! This was a temptation. The Lord could have done this. ³⁷

The Lord's answer is in verse 7, **It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'** ¹³ **Discipleship means personal sacrifice.** The Lord did perform marvelous miracles but those were not His central focus. Each sign led to an important teaching. His purpose was to teach us God's life and then, to live it out personally as a human being. ³⁸

¹³ A quotation from Deuteronomy 6:16.

Temptation # 3 - Satan's temptation is in verses 8 and 9, "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." **Make your ministry legalistic just like all the religions of the world!** The world's religions based on the obedience of rules, regulations and ceremonies are Satan's counterfeit where God is, really, unreachable. These systems result in attempts to appease a god, put Him on a shelf of your life and then, focus on living by the world's ways (Satan's ways!). ³⁹

The Lord's answer is in verse 10, **Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.** ¹⁴ **Discipleship is responding by grace through a personal relationship with a loving Heavenly Father,** not obedience to the rigid rules of a stern impersonal judge! When you make a personal relationship with God the central focus of your life everything else falls into place! ⁴⁰

The final equipment for your spiritual battle in Ephesians, chapter 6 is **prayer.** Verse 18, **And pray in**

¹⁴ A quotation from Deuteronomy 6:13.

the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. The communications link with your Commander facilitates all the rest of your armor. ⁴¹

The third part of being a soldier of the cross is that . . .

III. The Lord Gives Assurance of Victory!

The Lord gives assurance of victory! ⁴²

God's assurance of victory in the Bible is found in Matthew, chapter 16, verses 15 through 18, "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

In this scripture, the Lord made a play on words. ⁴³ Peter's name, in the original language, ¹⁵ means "a rock", actually "a bolder or even a pebble". ⁴⁴ The word **rock** ¹⁶ in this passage refers to bedrock or a large mass of rock! ⁴⁵

The Lord didn't intend to build His church on a fallible person, as much as He loved Peter, but upon the solid rock foundation of the Good Confession, **You are the Christ, the Son of the living God** - not Peter the pebble! This is the foundation of which **the gates of Hades will not overcome it**. ⁴⁶

This is not the picture of the church most of us think about when we see this scripture. I saw the church as a mighty fortress so strong no army could penetrate it. ⁴⁷

¹⁵ πέτρος.

¹⁶ πέτρα.



But the flavor from the original language is that the church is like an advancing Roman army in wedge formation. Shields are forming a wall as the soldiers advance with swords drawn. Enemies could not withstand this advance and had to retreat! 48



Evidence of the Lord's hand in battle in ancient times is the Battle of Jericho. ¹⁷ His soldiers marched around this city at the Lord's command and God miraculously crumbled the walls fortifying the city. The soldiers simply charged and defeated the stunned enemy. ⁴⁹

I believe that the Lord's miraculous hand was seen in modern times as well. Just not as obvious.

In World War Two I believe the Lord's hand was in, at least, the two major conflicts that stemmed the tide of the war. ⁵⁰

The Battle of Midway was seen as the decisive battle of the Pacific Theater.

The background: the Doolittle Raid occurred four months after Pearl Harbor. In the Battle of the Coral Sea, the month prior to this battle, the Japanese lost one of their main aircraft carriers.

¹⁷ Joshua 6:12-21.

The location was the mid Pacific Ocean close to the Naval Air Station, Midway Atoll. The date: June 1942. The theater commanders were Admiral Yamamoto and Admiral Nimitz. The battle commanders were Admiral Nagumo and Admiral Fletcher.

The combat units for the Japanese were 200 ships, four of which were heavy aircraft carriers with 600 planes. The Americans had the aircraft carriers Enterprise, Hornet, and partially damaged Yorktown plus the Naval Air Station at Midway Atoll. ⁵¹

I believe here is the hand of God. The Japanese decided to divide their fleet into three sections. One section attacked Alaska. One section stayed hundreds of miles behind the strike force making them ineffective. The battle experienced Admiral Nagumo was confused for twenty minutes unable to decide whether to put torpedoes or bombs on his aircraft. This allowed the Americans the time to find and destroy much of his fleet. The Japanese Navy was never the same! ⁵²

The Battle of the Bulge was seen as the decisive battle of the European Theater.

The background: this battle was an attempt by the Axis powers to counterattack by pushing a bulge through advancing Allied forces after killing a thousand British soldiers with an airborne division.

The location was the Ardennes Forest in Southern Belgium. The date was December 16, 1944. The commanders were Field Marshall von Rundstedt and General Patton.

The combat units for the Germans consisted of a quarter million soldiers with their new armored tanks. The Americans countered with the First and Third Armies.

The situation for the contact between the opposing armies was happening during the German winter consisting of clouds, freezing rain and snow. The Germans were advancing and being resupplied under the cover of severe weather.

General Patton ordered his staff chaplain, Chaplain O'Neill to come up with a weather prayer for favorable weather. The prayer was published and sent to every soldier in Patton's armies to be prayed the following morning. ⁵³

I believe here is the hand of God: six cloudless days beginning the day of "Patton's Prayer". Allied aircraft were able to stop the German supply lines stopping the Battle of the Bulge in its tracks!

As soldiers, you are assured of victory when you remain faithful to your Commander-in-Chief, Lord Jesus! ⁵⁴

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life . . . ¹⁸ ⁵⁵

When the Lord comes again, He will say, **Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with**

¹⁸ | Timothy 6:12.

**a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.
Come and share your master's happiness! ¹⁹**

Be a good soldier of the cross!

biblelifemessages.org

¹⁹ Matthew 25:21.