

You are Soldiers of the Cross!

Intro:

1. Where do you get the idea that Christians are soldiers?
 - a. Phil 2:25 - 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.
 - b. Philemon 2 - . . . to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home. . .
2. If you are called by God to be soldiers of the cross - what does that mean?

II Timothy 2:1-4

I. You Were Enlisted

- A. How did God enlist soldiers in the Bible? (Num 1:1-2:34)
 1. Men only were conscripted, 20 years old & older (Num 1:3).
 2. There were certain exemptions from military service. - Deut 20:5-8.
 - a. v5 - Those who built a new house but hadn't dedicated it.
 - b. v6 - Those who planted a vineyard but hadn't tasted it's fruit.
 - c. v7 - Those engaged to be married.
 - d. v8 - Those who are afraid to go into battle.
 3. You were not fit for service if you had your focus on the things of this world instead of the battle for God!
- B. How does God enlist soldiers of the cross?
 1. He enlists you when you surrender your life to His authority & are baptized. (Act 2:38)
 2. He gives you the Great Commission: 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 commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. - Matt 28:18-20
 3. You are not fit for service if you put your hand to the plow & then look back (Lk 9:62).
 4. You must focus on pleasing your Lord - your commander-in-chief. II Tim 2:4 - No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer.

II. The Lord Armed You Sufficiently

Eph 6:10-18 - 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 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. 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.

- A. v10 - The Lord provided you with His mighty power - the Holy Spirit within you. (Heavy artillery)
 1. When you repent & are baptized - you are indwelt with the Holy Spirit. (Act 2:38)
 2. His Holy Spirit gives each of you the power to live the Christian life victoriously - but not perfectly!
- B. What did God arm you with to succeed in spiritual combat?
 1. v14 - **The Belt of Truth** - the truth of the gospel convicts you to live a life of truthfulness & integrity.
 2. v14 - **The Breastplate of Righteousness** - you are made righteous because of the cross, but you remain righteous through repentance & confession of your sin (I Jn 1:9).
 3. v15 - Your **Ammunition** - the gospel of peace prepares you.
 4. v16 - **The Shield of Faith** - when you really trust God with your life, the fire arrows of temptation can be quenched.

5. **v17 - The Helmut of Salvation** - your assurance of salvation gives you purpose & dignity in your life. "He who is conscious of his status before Almighty God should never have a low self-esteem!"
6. **v17 - The Sword of the Spirit** - God's word, the Bible. Saturate your mind & heart with it because it is your weapon in spiritual combat!
 - a. **ILL: The Lord's Temptations (Matt 4:1-11).** He used the memorized word!
 - b. **v3** - Temptation # 1 = Make your ministry social welfare. **v4** - Answer: Discipleship means eternal priority over temporary concerns of this life (Quote from **Deut 8:3**).
 - c. **v5-6** - Temptation # 2 = Make your ministry miraculous. **v7** - Answer: Discipleship means personal sacrifice (Quote from **Deut 6:16**).
 - d. **v8-9** - Temptation # 3 = Make your ministry legalistic. **v10** - Answer: we will do this God's way not Satan's. Discipleship is obedience by grace through a relationship with a loving Father, not obedience to rigid rules of a stern impersonal judge (Quote from **Deut 6:13**).
7. **v18 - Prayer** - the communications link with your commander.

III. The Lord Gives Assurance of Victory

- A. God's assurance in the Bible. **Matt 16:15-18** - "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."
 1. **Peter** (πέτρος) = a rock, boulder.
 2. **Rock** (πέτρα) = bedrock, a large mass of rock.
 3. The church is built upon the solid rock foundation of the Good Confession, not Peter the pebble!
 4. The picture: the church is like the Roman army marching in wedge formation, shields forming a wall & swords drawn. Enemies could not withstand this advance!
- B. Evidence of the Lord's hand in the Bible: **The Battle of Jericho (Josh 6:12-21).**
- C. Evidence of the Lord's hand in modern combat.
 1. **The Battle of Midway.** (Decisive battle of WW II - Pacific Theater)
 - a. Background: Doolittle Raid (4 months after Pearl Harbor) & Battle of the Coral Sea (the month before) with a Japanese carrier lost.
 - b. Location: Mid Pacific Ocean Naval Air Station, Midway Atoll. Date: June 1942.
 - c. Commanders: Theater Commanders: ADM Yamamoto vs. ADM Nimitz - Battle commanders: ADM Nagumo vs. ADM Fletcher.
 - d. Combat units: JAP - 200 ships (4 heavy aircraft carriers with 600 planes). AMER - Enterprise, Hornet & partially damaged Yorktown carriers & Midway Naval Air Station.
 - e. The Hand of God: Yamamoto's divided task force & Nagumo's 20 minutes of indecision.
 2. **The Battle of the Bulge.** (Decisive battle of WW II - European Theater)
 - a. Background: Attempt to counterattack by pushing a bulge through advancing Allied forces after killing 1000 British soldiers with an airborne division.
 - b. Location: The Ardennes Forest, Southern Belgium. Date: December 16, 1944.
 - c. Commanders: Field Marshall von Rundsted vs. GEN Patton.
 - d. Combat units: GER - 1/4 million soldiers with new armored tanks. AMER - 1st & 3rd Armies.
 - e. The Hand of God: Chaplain O'Neill's prayer & then several warm cloudless days.

As soldiers, you are assured of victory when you remain faithful
to your commander-in-chief, Lord Jesus.

"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life . . . - I Timothy 6:12
When the Lord comes again He will say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" - Matthew 25:21.