

Onward, (Wounded) Christian Soldiers?

✖ Sabine Barig-Gould apologized for the famous English hymn “Onward, Christian Soldiers” he wrote in 1865. Why? For writing it so quickly that some of its lines were “faulty.” He permitted hymnbook compilers to change some of the lyrics, such as the phrase “one in hope and doctrine” to “one in hope and purpose” and “we are not divided” to “though divisions harass.”

If Barig-Gould were alive today, he may be compelled to offer his permission to change the title, adding the word “wounded” to the plight of the Christian soldier.

Sadly, there are too many wounded saints limping around the church trying their level best to serve God. Rather than walking in their Christ-given victory, they are walking in emotional defeat that oft holds them in bondage. Beloved, many of us have battle scars but many others are still the walking wounded. They need the healing balm of Gilead, spiritual medicine to heal their souls. But they also need natural, practical help to break free.

Identifying Demon-Inspired Imaginations

I started thinking about all this on Sunday afternoon. I went down to a beachfront park near my condo to pray for a friend who was acting so erratic that I just wasn’t sure what to do. She would hardly speak to me and was moving in the realm of demon-inspired imaginations that were leading her to make untruthful accusations about herself. I tried to dispel the lies but the truth wasn’t getting through.

As an intercessor, I felt heavy. That’s one of the reasons I left my condo. I felt more like sleeping than praying. That oppressive spirit didn’t leave me as I strolled around the

beachfront park, Bible in hand, looking for a quiet place to sit and pray. But I was determined to get some answers.

I started toward one tree, but it didn't feel right. Eventually, I found my spot and settled on some sand and pine needles. I was reading in 1 John and praying. As I had been doing for two straight weeks, I continued to ask the Lord to show me what to do to help this person—to show me the root of what was going on.

Suddenly, I looked over my left shoulder and saw a piece of plastic partly covered with sand. Normally, I wouldn't pay attention, but the **Holy Spirit** illuminated it to me. I looked closer and I could see that it was a toy soldier. His owner had abandoned him, leaving him face down in the dirt. I scooped up the toy soldier and shook the sand off of him. He was in full military garb, complete with a hard hat and an impressive-looking weapon. He was still in a running stance, ready to charge to the front of the battle line and engage the enemy. But he couldn't run. He couldn't even walk. He was missing a foot. He was sorely wounded.

Receiving Prophetic Revelation

It was in that moment that I received a flash of revelation. This was my friend. She wants to run to the battle line. She wants to go hard after God. But she can't run. She can barely walk. She is wounded. It's not a mortal wound—but it's a wound bad enough to interfere with her daily walk with God. And it's not her fault. The enemy took some sucker punches early in life, then later in life, and then again and again throughout her life—and really poured it on in recent months. Many Christian soldiers who should have been there to help over the years failed to bear her burdens—and some even shot this wounded soldier, offering more pain to her already-suffering soul.

So what do you do with a wounded soldier that is so hurt and exhausted both physically and emotionally that they can't take

another step forward? Some in the church today would offer a scriptural platitude and a dose of condemnation for failing to count the trials all joy. Others would pressure the wounded soldier to get back in the fight despite the gaping bloody wound in their soul, spewing testimonies about how others on the brink of death cast the mountain into the sea by faith. Still others would insist on casting out the devil.

Well, it's not always so easy to count it joy or to get back in the fight. And it's not always a devil. I mean, yes, the devil is ultimately behind many of the attacks that leave the wounds. But that doesn't mean a wrestling match in a deliverance session will put the wounded soldier back on his feet. And it doesn't mean we need to encourage a pity party and help the wounded soldier lick his wounds, either. So what do you do? Where's the balance?

Helping Wounded Soldiers

I was talking with one of my spiritual mentors about this. Sometimes when you try to help a wounded soldier he lashes out at you and makes accusations against you, sort of like a wounded animal bites the hand that would save it. That's what happened to me. I didn't want to abandon my wounded friend like the child abandoned his wounded toy soldier in the sand at the beach. But nothing was working. I was out of answers. I was now being accused and attacked. My spiritual mentor offered me some sound wisdom that I'll share with you:

"Be present. Listen. Gently speak the opposite of the lies and encourage her to take the steps necessary to get better. There are many Christians who are at the point of breakdown—and others who are healthy now but may, later on, have periods of breakdown in their lives for many different reasons. They cannot war in the way we know it when they don't feel good. But they bounce back with us standing with them, and they war and fight again. God is in all of it and as they continue to make right choices along the way they will come out on the other side stronger than ever."

So next time you come in contact with a wounded soldier—and there are many, far too many—be quick to listen and slow to speak. Don't offer them pat answers from the Bible because you don't know their pain. Don't judge them for where they are because you don't know what you would do if you took the hits they took. If they hurl accusations against you, don't retaliate. Walk in love, and pray. Amen.

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