

God's Challenge: Be a 'Good Soldier of Jesus Christ'

"You therefore must endure hardship as a *good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (2 Tim. 2:3, NKJV, emphasis added).

Pause for a moment and prayerfully ponder whether or not you are fulfilling this divine mandate. A good soldier is known by seven primary traits: endurance, obedience, discipline, tenacity, fearlessness, bravery and willingness to sacrifice all.

Countless thousands have developed such admirable qualities for causes that are earthly and temporal. But our cause is heavenly, eternal and of the utmost importance. How much more should we be spiritually militant individuals of soldierlike courage and commitment, unflinching in the face of opposition!

One of our biggest challenges is the dual nature of the war in which we are engaged, for it rages on two primary battlefronts: one external, the other internal.

The *external war* is being waged against a very real yet unseen enemy – "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12, ESV). Satan and his demonic underlings have struggled for many centuries to achieve their goal of global dominance and have succeeded in deceiving "the whole world" (Rev. 12:9, NKJV).

Threatened by any consecrated life or proclaimer of truth, they constantly "make war" against those "who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17, NKJV). These evil powers greatly influence the world around us, which in turn pits itself against all who embrace biblical principles, so the church is often at odds with the culture.

Yet our battle is not against “flesh and blood” but against “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2, NKJV).

The *internal war* is with our own fallen nature. James the brother of Jesus shined a spotlight on this enemy when he asked, “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” (Jas. 4:1, NKJV). Paul also confessed, “I delight in the law of God according to the inner 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, MEV).

Prior to one’s salvation, these two battle zones are overwhelming. Even though some unsaved people succeed in living disciplined and stable lives, ultimately these two foes win in the end.

Both the external war and the internal war converge on one primary, central battlefield in God’s people – our minds. Yet the Captain of our salvation has given us an awesome promise:

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4-5, MEV).

What is a “stronghold”? Spiritually speaking, strongholds can exist in nations, cultures, schools, churches, businesses, families or individuals. Strongholds are established patterns of dark, negative, fearful, deceived or erroneous mindsets that are debilitating and destructive to those who are under their influence. Strongholds can be of human origin or demonic origin. Regardless of the source, believers have been given sufficient weaponry to win. Some of the “weapons of warfare” in our arsenal include the following:

The Word of God – There is great power in the declaration of God's Word in facing life's battles. The Word of God reigns supreme over every situation and circumstance. Saying "it is written" and quoting the Word of God was Jesus' way of combating Satan. We need to learn that lesson well.

The blood of Jesus – Nothing in the enemy's arsenal can match the blood of Jesus in authority and power. The cross is where Jesus triumphed over satanic "principalities and powers," so our victory is an established fact (Col. 2:15, NKJV). Confessing the shed blood of Jesus is an instantaneous thrust of irresistible authority.

The name of Jesus – One of the most powerful passages dealing with this weapon of our warfare is Luke 10:17-20. The 70 disciples had just returned to Jesus testifying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us through Your name." To them He responded, "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (vv. 17-18, MEV). If the name of the Lord was that powerful when the disciples had not yet been born again, how much more powerful it is in toppling the enemy's strongholds once believers are regenerated by God's power!

In considering just these three weapons, no wonder John declared in advance concerning the attack of Satan on the church in the last days, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11, MEV).

So rise up, good soldier of Jesus Christ, and "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12, NKJV). The world around us is falling apart because of its instability and insurrection against God. Evil spirits, using both human organizations and corrupt individuals, are grappling for the control of the nations. There is an evil globalist agenda on the horizon. But God also has a global mandate and vision that must be carried out by His soldiers – the gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations.

We cannot allow ourselves to sink into depression or be “at ease in Zion” (Amos 6:1, NKJV). We must instead implement an inspired battle plan, rising up daily to take back territory in the name of the Lord. We must seize our God-given weaponry, determined to overcome in the arena of our influence while tenaciously trusting in the promises of God, the faithfulness of God and the calling we have received from God.

In the months and years to come, as this global conflict intensifies, we must remember above all things that “the battle belongs to the LORD” (1 Sam. 17:47, MEV). {eoa}

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