

“THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER”

Ephesians 6:10-11

Seated (2:6); walking (2:10, 4:1, 5:2, 8); now standing (6:11, 13, 14). To stand means to resist hostile forces, to maintain one's ground despite severe opposition; it does not mean remaining motionless. The legionnaire's task was to expand the sway of Rome over the entire Mediterranean world. And similarly Paul is thinking of God's cause in our world. Four verses of introduction, verses 10 to 13, before he discusses the individual pieces of armor. Paul is like a rifle instructor at Parris Island.

I. SAINTS IN CHRIST ARE ALSO SOLDIERS IN CHRIST

A. Soldiers Fight For a Cause Greater Than Themselves

1:1. Saints are the “set apart” ones; set apart for what? Salvation, chap 1; “good works” chap 2; engagement in spiritual warfare; chap 6. Every saint is a soldier; every soldier is a saint. God's draft excludes no one. In the OT, all eligible males were soldiers; children, women and usually the Levites were excluded. But here there are no exclusions whatsoever.

What is the chief characteristic of a soldier? He is fighting for a cause much bigger than himself. Ancient Israel was not just driving out the Canaanites so that they would have somewhere to live. David's wars of conquest were expansions of the kingdom of God on earth. We should properly spiritualize all the military campaigns of the Old Testament in that regard. The book of Joshua is the OT book of Acts; the book of Acts is the NT book of Joshua. The church does not exist for herself. Like her Messiah she is to be a light to the nations, not just across the oceans, but across the street. C. S. Lewis: “Enemy-occupied territory --- that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.”

Martyn Lloyd-Jones used to tell about what happened in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Before its outbreak, they had their personal problems. So they went to the clinics. Then came the Civil War. It virtually emptied the clinics. People were suddenly cured by a greater concern. There will be no end to the introspection, to the lethargy, to the self-pity, to the self-absorption if we let it. But soldiers are called to fight in a cause greater than themselves. This outlook provides the necessary perspective on everything else.

Matt 28:18-20. Christian soldiers are actively engaged in following their Commander's final orders: take the gospel to others. The operative word is GO. Develop relationships with people outside of the faith; show them that you can be trusted. Care about their lives, their souls and their eternity. If your fellow soldiers are AWOL, go after them and bring them back.

B. Soldiers Must Endure Hardship

2 Timothy 2:3-4. This hardship perspective contradicts the consumer mentality. Perhaps you've heard this parody of “Onward, Christian Soldiers”: “Backward Christian soldiers, fleeing from the fight, with the cross of Jesus, nearly out of sight. Christ our rightful master stands against the foe onward into battle, we seem afraid to go...” No! Says Paul. If you are saint, then you are a soldier!!!

II. CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS ARE EMPOWERED WITH GOD'S ARMOR

A. Be Strengthened in the Lord's Armor

6:10-11. Soldiers must be strong; otherwise, they will be overrun. But how? In the power that only He can provide. “Power”: *kratos*, which is always used of superhuman strength (1 Pet 5:11; Jude 25; Rev 5:13). “Might”: *ischus* or natural strength. A man with 20 inch biceps. 1:19-20.

God would fight for Israel. Deut 1:30. This did not preclude the need for careful strategy and tactics; Israel would in most cases still have to put an army on the battlefield. But it was as if God had made every Israelite warrior a Samson (Judg 15:15-16). God fights for Israel by crowning their best efforts with success; God empowers Christian soldiers by giving them His own armor.

Isaiah 59: Christ is the Divine Warrior who girds Himself with armor. We put on the same armor. Thus the breastplate of righteousness (v. 14) is Christ's righteousness. God's armor, His entire armor, is sufficient for the task. 2 Cor 10:3-5. People often wear their own carnal armor. But the devil laughs.

But he can't laugh at the armor that defeated him at Calvary and has the same effect today. Satan bruised Jesus in the heel, but Christ crushed the serpent's head. He came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), freeing us from the fear of death (Heb 2:15) and He has done so with a resounding triumph! (1 Cor 15:55). The devil will be cast into the lake of burning fire, and torment the saints no longer. If you want everlasting protection from Satan and his underlings, take refuge in the Son of God. The blood of Jesus Christ has defeated the schemes of the devil. The ransom has been paid, and the captives have been set free!

B. Put it All On!

Put on or "clothe yourself" or "get dressed" with this armor. Earlier Paul had said in a more general sense, 4:24. But now he is thinking of a very specific scenario. No one puts on body armor or riot gear like putting on a pair of sneakers. You think about what you are going to face. When duty calls you to stand your ground before an angry mob with bricks and bottles, you want to make sure that every piece of gear is on and on correctly. This is how the Christian is to approach the whole matter of putting on the armor of God. The success of your mission depends upon it; the health of your soul as well.

To put on is to consciously appropriate all God's resources for your mission. One way to visualize this is to go from head to toe, from helmet to footwear, and think through the pieces of armor before you walk out the door every morning. Did you dress properly for church this morning? To put it on also means to embrace your role as a soldier. You must be pointed forward and moving ahead. Otherwise you are giving up ground rather than standing firm.

More about the wiles or schemes of the devil next week. But I will mention one today; the fable which tells of three apprentice devils who were coming to this earth to finish their apprenticeship.

Conclusion

How urgent have we been about this whole Epistle? Have we taken it home after these many Sunday mornings and meditated upon its truths? Have we gone to Christ not only for cleansing but strength for the conflict? Has the presence of darkness all around convinced us that we must be soldiers of light, breaking out of our comfort zones? Has the profundity of our praise for so great a salvation only increased as the weeks have gone by? There is indeed a great need to be urgent about spiritual things. Soldiers can ill afford to think otherwise.