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A Soldier of God

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A S O L D I E R O F G O D

Monte Hollowell
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Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before!
Christ the royal Master,
Leads against the foe;
Forward into battle,
See His banner go!

Onward, Christian Soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus,
Going on before! 1

What is a soldier? What does he do in his chosen vocation? Who is called to be a soldier? Why do people want to be soldiers? A soldier is one who serves in any cause. In our own country we have what is known as civilian soldiers. We use citizens to protect our country. This way we can all have a share in the protection of our rights. These civilian soldiers serve the causes of the United States government. These civilian soldiers want to serve their country because without their services we could not enjoy the freedom that we have in America today. In the song "Onward Christian Soldiers" it talks about a different kind of soldier. It tells of a soldier who has Jesus Christ as his General. He follows his instructions. One of the main goals of the American soldier is to protect his country and to keep it free. A Christian soldier's first marching order is given in Matthew 28:19-20. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name

of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, to the close of the age".² A good soldier in the U.S. Army follows the orders of his commanders. We too must follow the orders of our General, Jesus Christ. A soldier is a weapon used by a commander to carry out the mission that he must accomplish. Jesus Christ can use us to carry out His mission to get the whole world to follow Him. This is God's purpose in the world. He has used many different techniques throughout time. Soldiers who were dedicated to the causes, and who were to let God use them in the way he saw best.

David is probably the best known of God's soldiers. The Philistine army was camped on one side of the valley of Elah, and the Israelites were camped on the other side. The Philistine's had a champion who came out everyday to challenge the army of Israel to send him out a man to fight him. If the Israelite would defeat him the Philistines would become the servants of Saul's army, but if he lost the Israelites would be their servants. Saul promised many things to try and get someone to fight the giant. David came to bring some food for his brothers who were in the army. He couldn't understand why no one had accepted the challenge. He went to Saul to accept the challenge. Saul gave him the weapons of the soldier to defend himself with. But David did

not want these weapons. He had had no training with these weapons. He took the weapons he was familiar with, since he was a sheperd. He took with him a slingshot and a rod. The Philistine giant mocked him, and the Israelites didn't think he could do anything against the giant. He was but a small young man against a giant of a man. He went out to face Goliath. Goliath laughed at him. He told David that he would leave his body for the birds. David answered him, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down, and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel".³ David was willing to face great danger to serve his general. He went to face Goliath with physical offensive weapons, but more important was that he carried God as his protection. David wanted all the world to know that there is a God, and that the God of Istael is the one only living and true God, and all other pretended deities arevanity and a lie. David showed that his Lord could save His people without a sword or a spear and that He could win against both. David addresses himself to this combat rather as a priest that was going to offer a sacrifice to the justice of God than as a soldier that

was going to engage an enemy of his country.⁴ David defeated his enemy because his Lord and General had outfitted him with all the weapons that he needed to do his task.

Gideon is another of an example of a soldier who followed the instructions of God because he knew that his Lord would outfit him with all the weapons that he would need. Gideon had gathered an army to expell the Midianites from the Israelites land. He had an army of 32,000 men. This was very small compared to size of the Midianite army. Gideon began to have doubts about not having enough men, but God came to him and told him he had too many. The reason for God wanting to use less men was probably that he didn't want the Israelites to sit back and say, "Look what we did". God told Gideon to reduce the size by first telling them that anyone that was timorous and faint-hearted could return to his home without worry of being called a coward. It would seem that no one would leave because they wanted to defend their country. Many of these who left probably saw their lives before them and were afraid to die and receive their just rewards. 22,000 men returned to their homes. God again told Gideon that he had too many men. He sent them to drink of a stream nearby. God instructed, "Every one that laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself; likewise every one that kneels down to drink."⁵ Three hundred passed this test of God's. These men were hardy, that could endure long fatigue, without complaining of thirst

or weariness. They were also men that were hasty, that thought it long till they were engaged with the enemy, preferring the service of God and their country before their necessary refreshment. It was probably very hard on Gideon's part to let the great majority of his army go. This put everyman especially Gideon in a peculiar position. He must now rely on his faith and fight or he must leave and give up the cause. God told Gideon to arise and go and fight the Midianites, but if he wasn't sure to go to their camp and listen to what was taking place. He went and heard one man tell of a dream and heard another interpret it as being a forwarning that God have given into the hand of Gideon Midian and all its host. This gave Gideon the encouragement that he need. He returned to camp of Israel and said, " Arise; for the Lord has given the host of Midian into your hand." He divided the three hundred men into three companies, and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars, with torches inside the jars. And the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars, holding in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow; and they cried, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon"! When they blew the three hundred trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow and against all the army. Gideon followed his commander's orders. Here again we see that God can defeat the enemies of his people and of his church without having to take up a sword against. God often causes

the enemies of his church and of his people to be the instruments of their own destruction. Gideon defeated his enemies because his Lord and Commander outfitted him with the weapons he needed to do his task.

In the sixth of Joshua we find another example of how God used a soldier to destroy his enemies. We have in this chapter a contest between God and the people of Jericho. Jericho has decided that Israel shall not be its master. But God has already decided that Israel will rule Jericho. Joshua was told how to defeat this foe. He was not to prepare any trenches, nor was he to make any military preparations. He was to have the ark of God carried around the city once a day for six days by the priests. On the seventh day they were to march around the city seven times with the men of war marching with them. The priests were to blow the trumpets of the ram's horn. God has assured Joshua who assured the people that before nightfall on the seventh day they would be the masters of the town. They were to shout upon signal, and the wall would fall down. On the seventh day the people did as the Lord had commanded. They marched around the walls seven times. On the seventh time they shouted, "For the Lord has given you the city!" When the people had done that which they were commanded to do, the walls of the city fell flat. The Israelites then went into the city and destroyed all that were within. Here again we

see God magnifying his own power. He has exalted his own strength, not the strength of weapons. He has put an honor upon his ark. It was to be the instituted token of his presence, and to give a reason for the laws by which the people were obliged to look upon it with the most profound respect. He also put honor upon the priests, who were appointed upon this occasion to carry the ark and sound the trumpets. He tried the faith, obedience, and patience, of the people, to try whether they would observe a precept which to human policy seemed foolish to obey and believe a promise which in human probability seemed impossible to be performed. Thus by faith, not by force, the walls of Jericho fell down. He also was encouraging the hope of Israel with reference to the remaining difficulties that were before them. The strongest and highest wills cannot hold out against the Omnipotent. Joshua and his followers were given by God the weapons that they needed to carry out the task that He gave them.

We began by talking about Christian soldiers. Has God outfitted us with the weapons we need to combat our enemy, the Devil. We have seen where God took care of His followers in the past. Not only in military matters did He take care of them. He took care of the Israelites in the wilderness when they needed food, He gave it to them. When they needed water, He gave that to them. When Abraham

needed a sacrifice in the wilderness God provided it for him. Jesus talks in Luke about not worrying what you need in life. He tells his disciples that ravens do not sow or reap and look how our heavenly Father takes care of them. In Luke 12:28, "O men of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. For all the nations of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom and these things shall be yours as well". If God has taken care of these surely He has made preparation for us as Christians to fight our battles and win them.

In Ephesians 6:10-20 we read about the weapons left for us to use. Life is a constant battle. We are constantly being tempted to follow the devil instead of following the teaching of Jesus Christ. We are told that we must be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. We must have the same faith that Joshua and his followers displayed at the battle of Jericho. We must totally surrender ourselves to his will. Without the strength of God we could not go from day to day. Grace and help must come from heaven to enable us to do that which we cannot do of ourselves in Christian work and warfare.

A Christian soldier must be well armed. We must get and exercise all the Christian graces, the whole armour, that no part of our character will be naked or exposed to our ever

enemy, the Devil. In we expect to have true grace we must aim at all grace, the whole armor that God promises to us. Wh can never have any armor of our own that will be armor of proof in a trying time. Nothing will stand up for us in the battle but the whole armor of God. The Christian must be totally prepared so he can stand up against the wiles of the Devil. Why do we need this whole armor of God? Why are we not able to stand up on our own against our enemy? We are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the sord rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

We are not fighting against ordinary human enemies We have to fight an enemy who uses wiles. He has a thousand waysof taking over the unstable soul. He is a very powerful enemy. Paul speaks of principalities and powers and rulers. They are numerous. They are vigorous, and rule in those heathen nations which are yet in darkness. Satan's is a kingdom of darkness; as compared to Jesus Christ's which is a kingdom of light. We have spiritual enemies in high places. Our danger is greater from our enemies because they are unseen, and assault us before we are aware of them. We have need of faith in our Christian warfare, because we have spiritual enemies to grapple with.

After we put own this whole armor our duty is to

stand our ground, and to withstand our enemies. We must not let ourselves be caught up by the Devil's tricks. If he has to meet us head on then we have a better chance of withstanding his temptations. To stand up against Satan is to stand up against sin. As children we are told to tell the Devil to get behind us. If we stand up against the Devil he will flee from us. Our present business is to withstand the attacks of the devil, and to stand our ground. If we can accomplish this , then we will be finally victorious.

Paul tells us what weapons that God has set up for us to use. He gives us both offensive and defensive weapons. God still follows the pattern that He has set up through the ages of protecting us from our enemies. The first weapon that he mentions is the one which makes all the other ones fit us. Truth shall be our girdle. In the Roman army the girdle held all the other pieces of armor together. This is the strength of our defensive weapons. With it as the basis for our defense, the other parts would be useless.

Righteousness is the next piece listed. It is to be our breastplate. The Roman's breastplate covered the vital areas of the soldier's body. Most important it shelters the heart. The righteousness of Jesus Christ within us is our breastplate to strengthen our heart against the attacks which the devil makes against us. This is the most vulnerable part of the body. In combat the soldier takes precautions to cover

his heart. He can be wounded in other parts of his body and still survive. But if he is struck in the heart, he will not survive. We must as Christians take precautions to protect our heart from the Devil. With the righteousness of Christ in our hearts we can withstand the tricks of the Devil.

Resolution must be as the greaves to our legs. Shoes or greaves of brass, were formerly part of the Roman soldier's armor to defend the feet against the gall-traps, and sharp sticks, which were laid in the oncoming army's path to obstruct the way. The soldiers who fell upon them were unfit to march. The preparation of the gospel of peace signifies a resolved frame of heart which will enable us to walk with a steady pace in the way of religion. It is styled the gospel of peace because it brings all sorts of peace. This will certainly preserve you from many great temptations and persecutions, just like the shoes saved the soldiers from the sticks that obstructed their way.

Faith must be our shield. This is probably more necessary than any of the other pieces of the armor. Faith is our best protection in our great times of temptation. The breastplate secures the vital areas, but with the shield we turn every way. Faith is like a shield, a sort of universal defense. Our enemy is wicked, and he strives to make us wicked. His temptations are called fiery darts. Violent temptations, by which the soul is set on fire of

hell, are the darts which the Devil shoots at us. Faith is the shield with which we must quench these fiery darts, that they may not hit us, or that they may not hurt us. Our shield is the only way we can keep Satan at a safe distance from us. Since he does us tricks to try and get us on his side, he will always come from the rear and catch us by surprise whenever he can. Only with our shield can we protect ourselves from all sides. Only our faith can keep us from being taken in by the Devil. Salvation must be our helmet. Hope which has salvation at its center. He would tempt us to despair, but good hope keeps us trusting in God, and rejoicing in him. Hope is all we as Christians really have to stand on. Hope that we will one day be with him in heaven is the thing that enables us to withstand the temptations of this life.

Paul now tells us of our offensive weapons. We have looked at our defensive weapons. These help to withstand the trials and temptations of each day. They help us to keep Satan fleeing from us. We, as Christian soldiers, are also equipped with weapons to fight Satan with. These help us to make him give ground, instead of us losing our ground. Battles are not won by the use of defensive weapons. We must take the fight to Satan when we have successfully repelled him. Only in keeping him fleeing from us with our offensive weapons can we ever hope to gain the final victory over him.

Our first offensive weapon is the word of God, which is called the sword of the Spirit. It is called this because he renders it efficacious and powerful. This being hid in the heart, will preserve from sin. The word of God is quick. It is very lively and active. It convinces powerfully, converts powerfully, and comforts powerfully. It is powerful to batter down Satan's kingdom, and to set up the kingdom of Christ upon the ruins thereof. It is sharper than any two-edged sword. The sword can put Satan on the run. He can not stand up against it. With it we cannot fail in our task of standing up to the temptations of Satan.

Prayer is the other great weapon that God gives to us as his followers. Prayer ties all these other weapons together. Prayer helps us to keep the Devil on the run once we put him down. This weapon keeps in tune with the orders of our commander. It helps to know what we should do in everyday life. This is also the way that we can find out what the Devil is up to. Prayer to the Christian soldier is the line of communication between the General of the Army and the soldier in the field. If we ever hope to withstand the Devil's onslaught we must have open lines of communication. These other weapons have been mainly to protect ourselves from the enemy. This weapon keeps us in line with what the whole Christian Army is doing to defeat the enemy. Prayer is the greatest of all the weapons that we are equipped with.

If we are in a constant state of prayer, the devil can never get in to defeat us. This constant prayer gives the Christian strength enough to withstand any onslaught.

This is 1970. The Devil is probably more active in our world today fighting the causes of God and Jesus Christ than at anytime in the past. In the Old Testament days God gave his people the weapons to fight their foes. Christ came into the world to give us another chance to do God's will. He was killed for us. He returned to heaven, but he did not leave His followers on earth defenseless against the powers that killed Him. The Christian soldier has more than enough weapons at his disposal to defeat the powers of darkness. Who is called to be a soldier? This is left up to the individual whether he will join the army of Jesus Christ, but it is also left up to the people who join to use the weapons of a Christian to defeat the Devil. We are more powerful than Satan will ever hope to be. Why then is he causing so much trouble? Could it be that we who call ourselves Christian soldiers have not put on the whole armor of God!

Soldiers of Christ, arise, and put your armor on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies Through His
eternal Son; Strong in the Lord of hosts, and in His mighty
power, Who in the strength of Jesus trusts Is more than
conqueror. Stand, then, in His great might, With all His
strength endued; But take, to arm you for the fight, The

panoply of God: That, having all things done, And all your
conflicts passed, Ye may o'er-come thro' Christ alone, And
stand entire at last. From strength to strength, go on;
Wrestle, and fight, and pray; Tread all the powers of dark-
ness down, And win the well-fought day: Still let the Spirit
cry, In all His soldiers, "Come!" Till Christ the Lord who
reigns on high Shall take the conquerors home.⁷

The hope of all Christian soldiers is to be taken home
to live with their Lord, Master, and General.

FOOTNOTES

1. Baptist Hymnal, "Onward Christian Soldiers"; song 412, stanza 1. Convention Press, Nashville, 1956.
2. The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version. Matthew 28: 19-20. Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, 1952.
3. Ibid., 1 Samuel 17:45-47.
4. Rev. Leslie F. Church, Commentary on the Whole Bible by Matthew Henry. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1961. p.307-308.
5. Revised Standard, op. cit. Judges 7:5.
6. Church, op. cit. p.252-253.
7. Hymnal, op. cit. "Soldiers of Christ, Arise" song 416.