

## Lesson 3

# A SOLDIER

## The Disciple's Battle

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

The first disciples of Christ lived in the Roman Empire and would have been very familiar with the dress and duties of the Roman soldiers. When the apostle Paul referred to Christians as soldiers of Christ, he was using an illustration with which his readers would have been all too familiar. In this lesson, we will consider some things that we can learn about discipleship from a soldier.

### 1. We Have A Commander

We are soldiers of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:3-4). He has enlisted us as soldiers, and we must please Him with our service. He is the captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10). As a commander, He gives us orders to follow (Matt. 8:8-9, Luke 6:46). However, He does not send us into battle. He leads us (Matt. 16:24) and is ever present and ready to help us in the fight (Heb. 2:18; 4:14-16; 7:25).

### 2. We Have An Enemy

The existence of an army implies the possibility of an enemy. Who is the enemy of God's people? Is it the false religions of the world, denominations, or cults? Is it the atheists who are promoting a humanist agenda in our society? Is it brethren who are teaching and fellowshipping error? While battles come from these sources, none of them are our true enemy, "for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:12).

Our adversary is the devil (1 Pet. 5:8). The Bible warns us of the seriousness of our enemy. With its figurative language, the book of Revelation describes Satan as "a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads" (12:3). He is not to be underestimated.

We are **soldiers** of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:3-4). He has **enlisted** us as soldiers, and we must please Him with our **service**.

## The Whole Armor Of God

### Belt

- The Truth

### Breastplate

- Righteousness

### Shoes

- Preparation Of The Gospel Of Peace

### Shield

- Faith

### Helmet

- Salvation

### Sword

- Word Of God

We have been informed about the nature and the strategy of our enemy, "for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). We know that he is a murderer and a liar (John 8:44). Satan is extremely dangerous and cannot be trusted. He is a predator, attacking the weak and unsuspecting (1 Pet. 5:8). He disguises himself and his true motives (2 Cor. 11:14). He has help in the spiritual realm (Eph. 6:12), as well as from men who are ensnared through sin and error to do his will (2 Tim. 2:26).

We must remember who our enemy is. Satan is a strong, crafty, and evil adversary who will do anything to devour our soul. He does not fight fair. Many soldiers have fallen because they have underestimated the enemy.

### 3. We Have Weapons

The Lord has not left us alone and defenseless against this formidable enemy. We are given the whole armor of God that we may be able to withstand in the evil day (Eph. 6:13-18).

**Belt** – The belt was a foundational garment. It held everything in place. The thing that holds everything in place for the disciple is the "truth." The unquestionable truth of Scripture gives the soldier of Christ stability as he fights his battles.

**Breastplate** – The breastplate consisted of pieces of leather or metal fashioned together. The purpose of the breastplate was to protect the heart and other organs. "Righteousness" is moral uprightness, holiness, godliness, and integrity. A disciple who is protected with righteousness cannot be penetrated with accusations, threats, or false charges. One who fills his heart with righteousness is not easily tempted to sin.

**Shoes** – Roman soldiers wore sandals with hobnailed spikes to assure good footing. When their feet were shod, they were ready. Our feet are to be shod with the "preparation of the gospel of peace." We must be ready to use, spread, defend, and teach the gospel.

**Shield** – The Roman shield was a full body shield. It consisted of a framework of wood, wicker or metal, covered with thick leather and sometimes lined with metal. This shield could absorb the impact of an enemy's weapon, repel spears and arrows, and be used as a protective roof. Our shield is our "faith." Committed conviction repels Satan's attacks of temptation, doubt, fear, worry, lust, etc.

**Helmet** – A helmet was usually made of metal, though some were made of leather. We certainly appreciate the importance of protecting the head. Helmets are worn today in a variety

of hazardous situations – sports, construction, mining, military exercises, etc. A blow that would merely injure another part of the body could be fatal if landed on the head. The assurance of our “salvation” allows us to hold our head up in our fight (2 Tim. 1:12).

**Sword** – The sword was the soldier’s most important weapon. This is the only offensive weapon on this list. Our sword is the “word of God.” The word of God is a sharp sword that penetrates the heart of man (Heb. 4:12) and defeats the enemy (Rev. 19:15, 21; Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).

All of these weapons have one thing in common – they all come from the word of God. God has not left us defenseless. We have His word.

Although not specified as a piece of the armor of God, we must recognize the place and importance of prayer (v. 18). The strength to overcome the enemy is found in the Lord, not ourselves (v. 10).

#### **4. We Must Train**

Paul told Timothy to be a “good soldier of Jesus Christ.” Soldiers have to go through boot camp and training to be their best. They have to exercise and run drills in order to stay in shape and be prepared to serve.

If the word of God is our weapon and armor, we have to learn how to use it. Given time, every disciple is expected to be experienced and skilled in the word of God (Heb. 5:12-14). We need to progress from nursing on the milk of the word to rightly dividing the meat of the word (2 Tim. 2:15).

Where does this training take place? When we read, study, and meditate upon the word of God, we are developing and training. However, many valuable opportunities to train ourselves in the word of God are found in the assemblies of the church. Time spent listening to gospel preaching, preparing for and taking part in Bible classes, preparing to teach a class or deliver an invitation, attending gospel meetings, home Bible studies, etc. are all valuable opportunities to learn the word of God.

It takes time to train ourselves in the word of God. There are no shortcuts. We are not to entangle ourselves in the affairs of this world to the point we neglect our duty as a soldier (2 Tim. 2:4). If we are too busy to train (study the word of God), then we are too busy.

#### **5. We Must Fight**

Soldiers are not enlisted, trained, and equipped to sit around and do nothing. When the order is given, the soldier must be ready to fight. A number of words are used to express the duties of an active soldier of Jesus Christ.

**Fight** (1 Tim. 6:12). If we have enlisted in the Lord’s army, then we must fight the good fight of faith. The Greek word that is translated *fight* means to engage in a conflict, to contend with an adversary. The Lord did not provide a scabbard for our sword. It must remain drawn and we must be ready to use it.

**Wrestle** (Eph. 6:12). While some modern warfare is fought at a distance (sending jets and missiles), wrestling denotes hand to hand combat. Spiritual warfare is a messy struggle which demands our involvement. The opponent must be engaged, overpowered, pinned down, or run out of the ring.

**Resist** (1 Pet. 5:9). We are never to surrender to the enemy. We are not to lay down our arms or negotiate a peace treaty. In Christ we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37). Being fully clothed with the armor of God, we are equipped to repel his attacks, resist his temptations, and make him flee from us (James 4:7). Remember, the armor of God does not protect the soldier's back. We must stand and fight.

**Endure Hardships** (2 Tim. 2:3). War is not an easy or pleasant task. A soldier of Christ must be prepared to endure the hardships that come with spiritual warfare (resisting temptation, overcoming moments of doubt and fear, standing for the truth in an unbelieving world, contending for the faith when error threatens the Lord's church, dealing with the desertion of fellow soldiers, etc).

## 6. Where Is The Battleground?

This is not a physical battle that is fought at a physical location. It is a spiritual battle that is fought in the hearts and minds of men (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

It is fought in our own minds when we are tempted to sin. Like the Lord, we must use the word of God to resist every temptation (Matt. 4:1-11). We must take precautions and safeguard ourselves against temptation (Rom. 13:14), filling our hearts with those things that are true, noble, and just (Phil. 4:8).

This battle is also fought in the minds of other people. The strongholds of error must be pulled down by a presentation of the truth so that every thought of man can be brought "into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Those in opposition to the truth must be humbly corrected so they can come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

When we are resisting temptation, teaching the truth, exposing error, warning against spiritual dangers, bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, restoring erring brethren, winning lost souls to Christ, etc., we are fighting the "good fight of faith."

## Conclusion

A soldier is a good portrait of the responsibilities of a disciple. Jesus is our leader, and we must please Him with our service. While there are many blessings found in being a disciple, the reality is we have a powerful enemy seeking to devour our soul. We are equipped, however, to win the battle for our soul. We are to take advantage of opportunities to study, lean strongly upon the Lord in prayer, resist the enemy and stand victorious with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## Questions

1. Who is our commander (2 Tim. 2:3-4)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. How does John describe Jesus in Revelation 19:11-16? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Describe how Jesus is willing to help us in our spiritual battles (Heb. 2:18; 4:14-16; 7:25).  
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4. Who is our adversary? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What do the following verses tell us about our enemy?  
John 8:44 - \_\_\_\_\_  
1 Peter 5:8 - \_\_\_\_\_  
2 Cor. 11:14 - \_\_\_\_\_  
Eph. 6:12 - \_\_\_\_\_  
2 Tim. 2:26 - \_\_\_\_\_
6. Describe each piece of the armor of God and its spiritual application to the life of a disciple (Eph. 6:14-17).  
Belt \_\_\_\_\_  
Breastplate \_\_\_\_\_  
Shoes \_\_\_\_\_  
Shield \_\_\_\_\_  
Helmet \_\_\_\_\_  
Sword \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is expected of a disciple (Heb. 5:12-14; 2 Tim. 2:15)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. When do disciples undergo their training? \_\_\_\_\_  
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9. What does the word "wrestle" imply about our spiritual battle (Eph. 6:12)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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10. What does Jesus use to resist the devil (Matt. 4:1-11)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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11. What is promised to those who resist the devil (James 4:7)? \_\_\_\_\_

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12. What are some hardships that must be endured by soldiers of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

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13. Where does this spiritual battle take place (2 Cor. 10:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:24-26)? \_\_\_\_\_

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