

JUST A SOLDIER

This story was told by a young man attending a meeting of the breakfast club. The visitors were asked to stand and give their name, business and residence. They came to a soldier and he said: "I am a soldier and for the duration I have no other name, just an American soldier. I have no business except to fight my country's battles. I have no home. Wherever my government needs me is my home until the war is over and the aims of my government are accomplished.

Let's examine some of the characteristics of a soldier to see if it will help us appreciate our role as a spiritual soldier in the Lord's army.

We know that to be a soldier one must enlist, since our armed forces are all volunteer. As Soldiers of Christ we "enlist" by obedience to the requirements of our Master, Jesus Christ. One is born again or made into a new creature Jhn 3:3, 5; 2Cor 5:17. We are chosen to be a soldier by Christ 2Tim 2:4 and this is accomplished as a result of His calling us by the Gospel 2Thes 2:14.

As any soldier is subject completely to the rule, training and discipline of the army, so are those who have enlisted in the Lord's army subject completely to the rule, training and discipline of the Lord. We are taught that we must observe all things Jesus commanded Matt 28:19, 20; Jhn 8:31, 32. One who is in the Lord's army must not transgress, that is, do contrary to what the teaching of Jesus says 2Jhn 1:9. We are taught that we must submit to the overseers or elders as well as one another Heb 13:17; Eph 5:21; 1Pet 5:5. Ours is a willing submission not one of coercion, no one forces us to submit to the authority of Christ.

As soldiers in the Lord's army we have a uniform that we are required to wear. We are told to put on the whole armour of God with which we can stand against our enemy, the devil Eph 6:11-18. This uniform helps identify us with the one to whom we belong. It lets others know whose battles we are fighting, that it is the Lord's battles and not ours. The weapons we use are not carnal in nature, but rather spiritual 2Cor 10:3-6. Our offensive weapon, remember is spiritual, it is the Word of God Eph 6:17. It is the only thing we have that will defeat our enemy.

Just as a good soldier will fight his country's battles, so must we as soldiers of the Lord. Our "country" is not this world; we are not defending or protecting the things of this world Jhn 18:36. Our country is a spiritual one, our fight is the good fight of faith 1Tim 6:12. As we fight our Master's battles we need to know who we are fighting 1Cor 9:26, 27. We, as Paul said, do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against things that are not of this world, that is, spiritual wickedness Eph 6:12.

Just as a good soldier in a physical army must be willing to endure hardships, so must we. The apostle Paul said: "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" 2Tim 3:12. Just read about the suffering and hardships that Paul was willing to endure 2Cor 11:22-28. We also must be willing to endure hardships 2Tim 2:3. The enemy that we face is the devil and he never quits 1Pet 5:8.

A good soldier does not become friendly with his enemy nor does he become so entangled with those things outside the realm of his service that he cannot please the one whom he serves. Paul told Timothy: "no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier 2Tim 2:4. Thus, a good soldier of Jesus Christ recognizes the difference in light and darkness, he understand that they are opposites 2Cor 6:14-18, and that he can have no fellowship with darkness if he desires to please God Eph 5:11. We must recognize our responsibility to please the one who chose us to be in His army 2Tim 2:4.

A soldier who is faithful in his service to his country receives regular rewards (pay each month) and at the end of his service more benefits. The Lord has promised that He is with us always, "even to the end of the age" Matt 28:20. Our leader has promised to bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Eph 1:3. Understand

that this does not mean He has promised to give us all kinds of material blessings, even though we have the promise that we will “receive an hundred fold in this time” Mk 10:29, 30. That promise relates to spiritual blessing also. The primary reward we are looking for is that crown of righteousness that Paul said was laid up for us 2Tim 4:6-8. However, we must all understand that in order to receive this promised reward we must be faithful until death Rev 2:10. Even though our Master will indeed bless us here in this life, we look for our promised reward in eternity when this life is over.

The question each person must answer is: have I enlisted in the Lord's army? You will not be drafted, it is completely voluntary. A person must surrender to the will of Jesus Christ and be made over, that is, be born anew Jhn 3:3, 5. If you have enlisted, then the next question you must answer is: am I subjecting myself completely to the rules of the commander-in-chief. Jesus Christ? If you are a soldier and are wearing the proper uniform; fighting your country's battles; enduring hardships; not associating with the enemy nor entangling yourself with other affairs then you are receiving blessings day by day and have hope of life eternal with God when this life is over. Do we all understand that if we are not in the Lord's army we are in the Devil's, because that's the only two armies there are Matt 12:3. Which one are you in?

(JLH)