

# SOLDIERS OF CHRIST

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**“Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus”**

(2 Tim. 2:3; ASV)

The church of Christ is composed of those who have been called out of the world, in a moral and spiritual sense, by having heard and obeyed the gospel. In addition to all the moral excellencies possessed by one who is not a child of God, Christians enjoy the relationship of being an heir of God, and joint-heir with the Lord, and are under Christ the Captain of their salvation, lovingly obeying His commandments.

The term *soldier* has long been in use among men, and is commonly used in making reference to those who have enlisted or are engaged in military service engaged in physical contests without regard to the cause for which they propose to fight.

It may appear contradictory to some to speak of Christ as the Prince of Peace, and then to make reference to His followers as soldiers, who are exhorted to fight—but theirs is the good **“fight of faith.”**

The term *soldier* may be applied to any man who has been elected or appointed to maintain peace in any community. But for those who are rebels against constituted authority there would be no place for soldiers.

In history, we read of many wars, and though there are times when it is difficult to determine the exact cause for a war, there is, and has always been a cause for every altercation between individuals, as well as nations. In carnal warfare, men are daily challenged by danger and death to risk their lives, but with courage and resistance they press on.

There are certain remunerations, rewards for all soldiers who honorably serve the time required by the government. In addition to life pensions, there are “Soldiers Homes,” institutions established under national and state control for the care of sick, disabled, and discharged men of the regular army and navy. Only military services personnel are eligible to enjoy these benefits. An applicant for admission must meet certain requirements and agree to abide by all rules and regulations in force, to perform all duties required of them, and obey lawful orders of the authorities of the home. When a pensioner, who has not assigned his pay to another, enters the home, his pay is drawn by the treasurer of the home and held in a “trust fund” for the pensioner.

In the army of the Lord, all may enter, **“Whosoever will,” “All nations,” “Every creature.”** One’s entrance into this army is dependent upon meeting the requirements given by Christ: “hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized” (Acts 2:14-38; 8:5-12:10:11; 16:25-33; 18:8; 19:1-5; 22:12-16). When these requirements are met one becomes a member of God’s family, His army, His church. His tenure as a Christian soldier is determined by his faithfully abiding by the law, what he does, and does not do.

**“If ye do these things,”**—If ye fail to do (2 Pet. 1:9-11). If he continues to **“fight the good fight,”** **“Suffer hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,”** he will daily be adding to his “trust fund” which will finally give him an eternal home in heaven.

Christians are referred to as soldiers—men and women who stand for the highest ideals, cleanest life, and purest motives. They are opposed to all that is sinful. They seek to overcome evil with good—that is, overcome evil by doing good. It is theirs to take the initiative in every righteous course. Theirs is a life of work, in which they must stand four-square for the right in every phase of life.

Because men have rebelled against the righteous law of Jehovah, they have become sinners. Sin is the reproach to any individual or nation. (Pro. 14:34). Have you stopped and for a moment contemplated what sin has done for men and nations? Pain and toil, disease and death are the fruits of sin. How often is it that the tempter in his effort to induce you to sin presents a face painted in attractive colors, and words oily and enticing, but the poison of the asp is beneath his tongue.

Do not persuade yourself that it is natural for you to lead a sinful life. Were such true there would be no place for Satan to be seeking you continually. Remember always you are the **“offspring”** of God (Acts 17:28).

Sometimes there are wars between nations manned by soldiers who are drafted by their respective governments. This is not true with the Lord’s army. His call is: **“Whosoever will”** **“Follow me.”** Sometimes there are those who have been led astray by false teaching, who engage in a kind of theological drafting, and claim to induct into the army of the Lord the unconscious infant. The command of the Lord is to “baptize” believers (Mat. 28:18, 19).

Come with me to the broken home; see the widow and children as they stand by the casket containing the body of the one who provided comforts, the physical needs and happiness, cold in death, and know: **“By one man sin entered the world and death by sin”** (Rom. 5:12). Look to the penal institutions which shelter the criminals and know that sin is the cause of the prison. All misery, shame, and heartaches come from sin. There is no place for sin in the natural world. Sin has no place in God’s plan, nor does it exist by His authority.

Shortly after the creation of man, sin entered the world, acts were committed contrary to the law of God. In Genesis 3, we read of the temptation and disobedience of Adam and Eve, and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Then we are also told of Cain, the first born of Adam and Eve, the first murderer, who slew his brother, Abel, and how God drove him from His presence. For the story of Cain and his descendants read Genesis Chapters 4 through 8. Josephus relates that he became the leader of a band of robbers, committed all sorts of licentiousness, corrupted the simplicity of primitive manners by his luxury, established the right of property by setting up landmarks, and was the inventor of weights and measures.

Other recorded sins and their consequences are: Rueben, Simeon, and Levi (Gen. 49:4-5); Destruction of the Old World (Gen. 6:5); Sodom (Gen. 19:21); The

Egyptians (Exo. 14:27); Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:2); Achan (Jos. 7:25); Saul (1 Sam. 28:18); The Children that mocked Elisha (2 Kings 2:24); Gehazi (2 Kings 5:27); Moses and Aaron (Num. 20:12); David (2 Sam. 12:20); Eli (1 Sam. 3:11-14); Peter (Luke 22:62); Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-12).

From the foregoing, we learn what sin is, its origin, and characteristics. We also learn that it brings humiliation, its **“wages is death,” “sting of death,”** and finally in the judgment will exclude us from heaven (1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 21:27; 22:14-15).

All sins are not “willful sins” nor is all worship “will worship.” Oftentimes, men of good intent have through some misstep or excess of zeal jeopardized the cause they support. Thus, it behooves all men to study the Bible, laying aside all doctrine of men and garbled traditions, allowing clear determination and absolute justice to guide. You will then be able to say with the Apostle Paul **“I have fought the good fight...Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness”** (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Sin is lawlessness, a transgression of law. **“Sin is a reproach to any people.”** There has never been a law by man, or Jehovah enacted that did not have a penalty; and justice demands he who disregards the law be punished. Having sinned, man was unable to escape the penalty of death. He had not at hand, nor could he provide a sacrifice as an atonement for sin. He was helpless and but for the grace of God, and the sacrifice and atonement of the Lord, man’s plight would be hopeless.

A few years Jesus spent on earth, gathered about Him a few disciples, and bade them go teach men to enlist in His service, and be laborers with Him in showing men and women the way of life—life indeed. Will you hear the clarion voice of the Lord and enlist in His service, thereby saving yourself, and those who will hear you? There is the necessity of: (1) Becoming a soldier, and (2) Doing the work of the soldier.

In becoming a soldier: (1) One must hear of the Christ, and His claims, as well as power. (2) He must believe, not only the fact about Him, but believe in Him (John 20:30-31; Acts 16:30-31; 11:21; John 3:16-17). (3) He must repent of his sins (Acts 2:38; 3:18; 17:30-31). (4) He must confess his sins (Rom. 10:9,10). (5) He must be baptized **“into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”** Baptized into the body of Christ, (1 Cor. 12: 13), which is the church (Col. 1:18-24).

When one enters the body of Christ, he thereby obligates himself to be obedient to the Lord, the Captain of our salvation.

On entering the army of the Lord, one is not fully prepared to do the service needed. Resting on the new soldier there must be for him preparation, learning the things he is to do and how to do them, things necessary in his life as a soldier.

The Great Commission calls for teaching one before he is baptized; and also the command is to teach those who were baptized.

Soldiers in the army were not enlisted to spend their time in idleness in the camp. As soldiers they need well rounded bodies, hence physical exercise, proper food, regular habits for physical development, as well as how to handle the weapons with which they are to fight, and how to protect themselves.

In the army of the Lord, the new recruit needs to be well cared for—proper food, and exercise! The new soldier needs the sincere milk, for he is no more than a babe in Christ, (1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12, 13), he is a freshman in the school of the Lord. He must learn the lessons of discipline. Men and women of experience and wisdom are to teach and train the new recruits in the Lord's army. Too, they must be students of the Lord, as well as go to the Father in prayer, ever keeping before them that they must depend on the Father and His wonderful grace; that temptation will come to them He knows, and ever keeps a vigil over them, seeing that no temptations come to them that they are not able to bear, and will, with the coming of the temptation, make a way for them to escape (1 Cor. 10:13). Lovingly, confidently they are to know the Father, ever keeps the watchful eye over, and makes a way for them to escape. Boldly they must face the devil and any of his henchmen, knowing none of them can drag him down, if he only will follow the lead of the Captain. Our Captain Christ is not one who seeks a place of safety and orders His soldiers to the front lines to grapple with the enemies, for He was tempted in all points as are we. He knows by actual experience what temptations mean, yet he sinned not! (Heb. 4:15) .

Come with me and let us see Him under the pressure of Satan's most artful effort to induce Him to sin.

Following His baptism, He was in the mountain for forty days fasting, and was hungry. Satan put in his appearance, saying: **"If you be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread"** (Mat. 4:3). Jesus made answer: **"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that procedeth out of the mouth of God"** (Mat. 4:4). Satan did not parley with Jesus about the passage, but made a different approach by asking, that He cast Himself from the point of high eminence, declaring that if He is the Son of God, His Father will give the angels charge and He will not dash His foot against a stone—would in no way be injured. Jesus made answer: **"It is written"** (Mat. 4:5-8). The third effort was made: "If you be the Son of God, see all the kingdoms of the world; worship me, and I will give them to you." Again, Jesus replied, **"It is written"** (Mat. 4:8-10). Satan is the enemy of the Lord, he seeks to triumph, and does not hesitate to lie! He lied when he made claim that the kingdoms of the world were his. The earth and the fullness thereof belong to the Lord. Satan is an usurper. Not one thing belongs to him by rights. What he holds is by unlawful conquest. Let us not overlook the simple lesson we learn from the way Jesus dealt with Satan. Note that in each instance He began His reply with: **"It is written,"** and gave a quotation from God's word (Deu. 6:16; 8:3; Psa. 91:11, 12). God's word is a hammer, it breaks the rocks to pieces. It is a fire which burns the chaff, it is a seed which

germinates, it is a sword which pierces (Jer. 23:29; Luke 8:11; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:11, 12).

Are you tempted to get drunk? Make answer, **“It is written.”** Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:10). Are you tempted to lie? Make answer, it is written: **“All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone”** (Rev. 21:8). Are you tempted to spend the Lord’s Day visiting some place of amusement? Make answer, it is written: **“Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is”** (Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2). Are you tempted to steal? Make answer, it is written: **“Thou shalt not steal”** (Exo. 20:15; Eph. 4:28). Are you tempted to swear? Make answer, it is written: **“Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain”** (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). Are you tempted to tell an ugly story? Make answer, it is written: **“Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth”** (Eph. 4: 29). Do you find yourself in a group of tattlers? Make answer, it is written: That the Lord condemns such (1 Tim. 5:13).

If you will study your Bible regardless of what the temptation may be, you will find a quotation which you can make saying: **“It is written.”** In Old Testament times God said: **“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, thou hast forgotten the law of thy God”** (Hos. 4:6).

One enters the army of the Lord primarily to save himself; but to save himself he must also be a servant, a laborer in the kingdom.

### **WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION**

**“Work out your own salvation”** (Phi. 2:12, 13). God works in you causing you to “will and to work.” How does God work in you? The answer is definite. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13. He works in one by His word. Hence, the necessity of knowing His word—for therein you learn what He would have you do. It was David who said: **“Thy word have I laid up in my heart; that I might not sin against thee”** (Psa. 119:11). The law of His God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide (Psa. 37:31).

### **THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD**

The soldier of Christ needs complete protection, for not against flesh and blood only, does he have to fight, but also against spiritual wickedness in exalted places. Satan with his retinue of aides is ever lurking in readiness to encompass and bring about the captivity of you.

The soldier of Christ has protective, as well as aggressive weapons. Have your loins girded about with truth. The Roman soldier wore a belt which served as a stay to his spine in the arduous task, and to it also some of the equipment of his armor was hung, and the skirts of his tunic tucked beneath it lest they hamper him in his easy movements then on a march, or in hand to hand conflict. To the soldier of Christ, the truth must ever be encompassing him. The breastplate of righteousness is to be worn that never a charge can be laid to his credit which

even smacks of an unrighteous deed. He must always do that which is right, regardless of what results may follow, for he is **“Guided in the paths of righteousness”** (Psa. 23:3). With righteousness as your girdle. (Isa. 11:5). The **“shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”** Your walk in the Lord is by faith, by faith you are justified, even though you do not understand all the promises and workings of Jehovah, for you are finite.

By faith you understand the worlds were framed. You do not understand how the dead can be raised; you believe they will be—by faith you rely on the promises of God. What if the enemy does attempt to ridicule you, insisting that your belief is unreasonable, and even contrary to all we see? He is condemning himself, for he is unable to explain that which he insists is true in his daily conversation. How did the earth come into existence? How does a man think? How do the different elements in food in the body produce different results, making bone, fat, hair, and blood? He does not understand what is electricity? These baffling questions he cautiously avoids. Never does he base his arguments on these unfathomable facts.

Sometimes there are enemies found in the number in an army. Some seek to betray, if thereby they think they can advance themselves in favor with men. From among your own selves shall rise false teachers (Acts 20:30). Such must be dealt with severely. Perverse men will arise and draw away disciples after themselves, forming factions. He who would divide, tear asunder the church of the Lord is more wicked, if possible, than the one who crucified the physical body of Christ—the church is His spiritual body, for which He gave Himself! **“Endure hardness as a good soldier”** (2 Tim. 2:3; *KJV*)~

Deceased