

55-02-01-The Christian Soldier

memorial day, spiritual warfare, spiritual armor, discipleship

2 Tim 2:3

Grip your sword, Christian soldier: you're in the army now!

### INTRODUCTION:

- 2 Tim 2:3, *Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus*. (loosely translated: **HOM.idea**.) *Memorial Day remembers soldiers* who died for *our country*. The Church celebrates *Holy Communion* to remember one Soldier, our Warrior King Jesus, Who died for *the whole world!*
- Citizens are called to fight when their country is at war; Christians are called to fight in the spiritual war of all the ages!* The Church has two sets of soldiers: the heavenly *Church Triumphant*, who “fought a good fight and kept the faith,” and the earthly *Church Militant*, still here continuing to fight in spiritual battles for the Kingdom of God.
- What does “*Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus*” mean?

- I. The Christian Soldier Must Take Up a Sword** (Does that sound like *gentle* Jesus talking? Yes!– Luke 22:36, [Jesus] said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. Yes! “*Sell your shirt, and get a sword!*”)
- A. God wants us to get a grip on His Sword– Eph 6:17, Take the helmet of salvation and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is **the word of God...** (Why?)
1. God’s Sword is for our spiritual battle against sin and Satan.
  2. Using His Sword, the Word of God, is the price of true peace:
    - a. *Compromise* with our enemy (Satan) is too high a price to pay (Don’t strike bargains with a con-artist, especially *the expert!*)
    - b. During battle, God’s Sword gives “peace that passes understanding” (We receive both “*peace with God*” and “*the peace of God*.”)
- B. But *God’s Sword* can cause division– Mat 10:34-36, Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ [Christian converts: if from *atheist families*, may be ridiculed; if *Jewish*, may be disowned; if *Muslim*, may be killed].

**TRANS:** Jesus didn’t paint a flowery picture of discipleship. He waged a war against sin and Satan at the cost of His own life. Those He has

rescued out of the enemy's hand, He calls to join Him in the conflict—He calls, “**Grip your sword, Christian soldier: you're in the army now!**” So, what does that mean? *It means...*

## II. The Christian Soldier Must Be Armed for Battle

A. Having the right attitude is half the battle— 1 Pet 4:1a, Therefore, since Christ **suffered in his body**, arm yourselves also with the same **attitude**. (The *mind* is a true battleground and the *right attitude* is Christ's attitude: a willingness *to suffer to endure hardship... like a good soldier.*)

B. Using God's armor is the other half of the battle— Eph 6:10-18 (NLT), A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

**TRANS:** *We're at war!* Christian soldiers must be armed for battle all day, every day, for all of life, having Christ's attitude and using God's armor. [In “The Weapons of Christian Warfare” from the *Handbook of the Militant Christian* (1503), Erasmus says: “I think we can truthfully say that nothing is more important in military training than a thorough knowledge of the weapons to be employed and the nature of the enemy to be encountered. I would add to this that the need for preparedness, of having the weapons close at hand, is also of the utmost importance. In ordinary warfare it is customary that leave of absence or actual retirement to winter quarters brings about a cessation of hostilities from time to time. This is certainly not the case in the kind of warfare we are describing. We can never permit ourselves to be even a finger's length from our weapons. Since our enemy is incessant in his attacks, we must be constantly on the battle line, constantly in a state of preparedness.”] **Grip your sword, Christian! There's a war on!** This is what “*Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus*” means....

III. **The Christian Soldier Has to Fight** (“*Kill or be killed*” is the law of battlefields, and it's *the reason we even have a Memorial Day!*)

- A. This is a fight of faith— 1Tim 6:12a, Fight the good fight of the faith. (*Faith acts on the word of the Commander, ignoring other voices.*)
1. Heresy asks, “*Has God said?*” (If Satan tries weakening our hold on the truth of God's Word, we must fight the good fight of the faith!)
  2. Temptation says, “*Relax, there's no rush!*” (If Satan tries keeping us from doing God's will, we must fight the good fight of the faith!)
  3. Fear says, “*Hardship means God doesn't care!*” (If Satan questions our trust in God's love, we must fight the good fight of the faith!)
- B. This is a fight of faithfulness— 2 Tim 2:4, No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. (Our interests in “civilian affairs” can absorb our attention, our affection, eat up all our availability for Kingdom service, unless we resolve “to please [our] commanding officer,” by “endur[ing] hardship... like a good soldier of Christ Jesus,” ready to live and die for His honor and glory.)

## CONCLUSION:

—*Memorial Day* remembers those fallen in battle. Those in the *Church Triumphant* fell in the midst of a spiritual war, but we remember them as *still alive*, surrounding us as “a great cloud of witnesses” who are urging us on in our fight of faith. The Apostle Paul is among them, cheering us on to be faithful, so that we can echo his own testimony in 2 Tim 4:7, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

—[In The Last Battle, the final book in the *Narnia* series, C. S. Lewis paints a picture of evil triumphing before the world ends, just as evil will do before Christ's return, as it describes in Revelation. A quote from that Narnian story inspired me to write this poem, expressing my personal hope to die faithfully fighting as a Christian soldier:

### “A NOBLE DEATH”

While aging drains my strength of mind, \ Exertions leave me short of breath. \  
 Recalling fruit, I clasp the rind; \ Reviewing life, I ponder death. \\  
 I'm not by morbid dreaming caught \ Nor tortured on the rack of fear. \ I'm merely  
 sobered by the thought \ That life's Last Battle might be near. \\  
 If so, I want to face the thing \ With words a dying centaur sent \ To brace the final  
 Narnian king, \ As on to certain doom he went: \\  
 “Remember, sire, all worlds must end— \ It's clear our own's about to die— \ Yet  
 noble death's a treasure, friend, \ That no man is too poor to buy.” \\  
 To finish well my dwindling days \ With faith fast focused on the fight, \ Heart  
 grateful, lips still lifting praise: \ That's how I hope to take my flight. (11/24/2016)

—**Grip your sword, Christian soldier: you're in the army now!**