

A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST NO. 938

A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“A good soldier of Jesus Christ.”
2 Timothy 2:2-3*

MANY men, many minds. In reference to what a Christian is, there have been very many and diverse opinions. According to the notions of some, a Christian is an exquisite of remarkably delicate tastes. He cannot worship except it be in a place whose architecture is correctly Gothic, otherwise his dainty soul will be shocked.

He is unable to offer prayer aright unless his devotions are uplifted upon the wings of the choicest music. And even then, scarcely will he be successful unless he is aided by sundry gentlemen, whose pedigree, like that of racehorses, can be clearly traced and whose garments the tailor has fashioned according to the directions of the ecclesiastical fashion book for the various seasons of the year.

If this be, to be a Christian in these days, it must be confessed that Paul has said little concerning this delicate and artistic sort of creature, unless indeed, he had reference to it in Galatians 4:9-11, which read at your leisure, neither would Paul's Master acknowledge it.

With some a Christian is a spiritual gourmand. He attends upon the ministry of the Word for no purpose but to be fed. He strongly denounces every sermon that is aimed at the conversion of sinners, for he looks even upon the Bible itself as a book solely intended to yield him personal consolation. The more any doctrinal teaching promises him a monopoly of good things and the more it excludes others, the better he enjoys it, it being to him a particular part of the sweetness of the feast, to believe that but a very slender company may dare to partake of it.

For him to live is to enjoy and not to serve. To gratify his selfishness he would blot out the free invitations of the Gospel. He is not a hearer only, but certainly he is not also a doer, he is a hearer and a feeder, in a certain coarse sense, upon the Word of God, and nothing more. That is not Paul's ideal of a Christian. He does not picture him with his napkin in his hand, sitting at a banquet, but rather with a sword girt upon his thigh, ready for the conflict.

To some the highest form of Christian is a great reader, a profound student of the best of books, for the purpose of composing spiritual riddles. He reads for no practical end. He is a picker out of words, a speller over of syllables, a magnifier of microscopic points, a proficient in biblical hair splitting. The more a passage perplexes others, the more sure he is of its meaning. He cares most for things which have the least practical bearing.

He is a peeper through spiritual spyglasses, fancying that he can interpret what wiser men leave to God to expound. He is a hunter after spiritual coney, which, if caught, would never pay the huntsman for his toil, while the weightier matters he holds in small esteem. This does not seem to have been Paul's conception of a Christian, for the apostle was no lover of foolish and unlearned questions which gender strife.

And I am afraid I must add that with some the *beau ideal* of a Christian is that of a man who can sleep out his existence in blissful serenity, a man who, having believed or professed to believe, in Christ, has settled his lifework forever, and henceforth can say, “Soul, take thine ease, thou hast henceforth much goods laid up for many years in thine own security, eat, drink, be merry in the Gospel. But as for feeding the hungry or clothing the naked, art thou thy brother's keeper? What is that to thee? See thou to thyself, and if thou thyself be right, let fate, or providence, or sovereignty, take care of the rest.”

Paul does not appear to have pictured true believers as sluggards sound asleep upon the downiest beds. His description of a Christian in the text is that of a soldier, and that means something far different either from a religious fop, whose best delight is music and millinery, or a theological critic who makes a man an offender for a word, or a spiritual glutton who cares for nothing but a lifelong enjoyment of the fat things full of marrow, or an ecclesiastical slumberer who longs only for peace for himself.

Paul represents him as a soldier, and that, I say, is quite another thing. For what is a soldier? A soldier is a practical man, a man who has work to do, and hard, stern work. He may sometimes, when he is at his ease wear the fineries of war, but when he comes to real warfare he cares little enough for them. The dust and the smoke, and the garments rolled in blood, these are for those who go soldiering. And swords all hacked, and dented armor, and bruised shields, these are the things that mark the good, the practical soldier.

Truly to serve God, really to exhibit Christian graces, fully to achieve a lifework for Christ, actually to win souls, this is to bear fruit worthy of a Christian. A soldier is a man of deeds, and not of words. He has to contend and fight. In war times his life knows little of luxurious ease. In the dead of night perhaps the trumpet sounds to boot and saddle, just at the time when he is most weary, and he must hurry to the attack just when he would best prefer to take his rest in sleep.

The Christian is a soldier in an enemy's country always needing to stand on his watchtower, constantly to be contending, though not with flesh and blood, with far worse foes, namely with spiritual wickedness in high places.

The Christian is a self-sacrificing man as the soldier must be. To protect his country the soldier must expose his own bosom. To serve his king he must be ready to lay down his life. Surely he is no Christian who never felt the spirit of self-sacrifice. If I live unto myself I am living unto the flesh, and of the flesh I shall reap corruption. Only he who lives to his God, to Christ, to the truth, to the church, and to the good old cause, only he is the man who can reckon himself at all to be a soldier of Jesus Christ.

A soldier is a serving man. He does not follow his own pleasure. He is under law and rule. Each hour of the day has its prescribed duty, and he must be obedient to the word of another and not to his own will and whim. Such is the Christian. We serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Though no longer the slaves of man so as to dread his frown, we are servants of Christ who has loosed our bonds.

The soldier is full often a suffering man. There are wounds, there are toils, there are frequent lyings in the hospitals, there may be ghastly cuts which let the soul out with the blood. Such the Christian soldier must be, ready to suffer, enduring hardship, not looking for pleasure of a worldly kind in this life, but counting it his pleasure to renounce his pleasure for Christ's sake.

Once again, the true soldier is an ambitious being. He pants for honor, seeks for glory. On the field of strife he gathers his laurels, and amidst a thousand dangers he reaps renown. The Christian is fired by higher ambitions than earthly warrior ever knew. He sees a crown that can never fade. He loves a King who best of all is worthy to be served. He has a motive within him which moves him to the noble deeds, a divine Spirit impelling him to the most self-sacrificing actions. Thus you see the Christian is a soldier, and it is one of the main things in Christian life, to contend earnestly for the faith, and to fight valorously against sin.

Paul does not exhort Timothy to be a common, or ordinary soldier, but to be a "*good* soldier of Jesus Christ," for all soldiers, and all true soldiers, may not be *good* soldiers. There are men who are but just soldiers and nothing more, they only need sufficient temptation and they readily become cowardly, idle, useless and worthless. But he is the good soldier who is bravest of the brave, courageous at all times, who is zealous, does his duty with heart and earnestness.

He is the good soldier of Jesus Christ who, through grace, aims to make himself as able to serve his Lord as shall be possible, who tries to grow in grace and to be perfected in every good word and work, that he may be in his Master's battles fit for the roughest and sternest service, and ready to bear the very brunt of the fray.

David had many soldiers, and good soldiers too, but you remember it was said of many, “These attained not unto the first three.” Now Paul, if I read him rightly, would have Timothy try to be of the first three, to be a good soldier. And surely I would this morning say to my dear comrades in the little army of Christ meeting here, let each one of us try to attain unto the first three. Let us ask to be numbered among the King’s mighties, to do noble work for Him, and honorable service, that we may bring to our Master’s cause fresh glory. Be it ours to covet earnestly the best gifts, and as we have had much forgiven, let us love much, and prove that love by signs following.

Before I proceed fully to open up this metaphor, let me say that though we shall use military terms this morning, and stirring speech, it should ever be recollected that we have no war against persons, and that the weapons which we use are not such as are forged for the deadly conflicts of mankind. The wars of a Christian are against principles, against sins, against the miseries of mankind, against that evil one who has led man astray from his Maker, against the iniquity which keeps man an enemy to himself, and the weapons that we use are holy arguments and consecrated lives, devotion and prayer to God and teaching and example among the sons of men.

Ours is battling for the peace, and fighting for rest. We disturb the world to make it quiet, and turn it upside down to set it right. We pull down strongholds that they may not pull down the Zion of God. We dash down the mighty that the humble and the meek may be established. We have no sympathy with any other war, but count it an evil of the direst sort, let it be disguised as it may.

Now with that caution, whatever I shall seem to say will not sound as though I loved or excused ordinary warfare, for nothing can be more abhorrent to the Christian man than wholesale slaughter. Nothing can be more desired by us than the promised era, when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.

Now let us come to the work of this morning. First, we shall *describe a good soldier of Jesus Christ*. And when we have done so, we shall *exhort you to be such*.

I. First then, this morning we shall endeavor to DESCRIBE A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST.

We must begin with this fundamental—*he must be loyal to his King*. A soldier of Jesus Christ owns the divine Redeemer as his King, and confesses His sole and undivided sovereignty in the spiritual kingdom. He abhors Antichrist in all its forms, and every principle that opposes itself to the reign of the beloved Prince of Peace. Jesus is to him both Lord and God.

The day when he enlisted, he did as it were put his finger *into the print of the nails*, and said with Thomas, “My Lord and my God.” This was his enlistment declaration, and he remains true to it. “Christ is all,” is his motto, and to win all men to obedience to Immanuel is his lifework. Till he sheathes his sword in the last victory, the Crucified is sole monarch of his soul, for Him he lives, for Him he would even dare to die. He has entered into solemn league and covenant, to maintain against all comers that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Moreover, the Christian soldier not only acknowledges Jesus to be his King, but his heart is full of loving devotion to Him as such. Nothing can make his heart leap like the mention of that august, that more than royal name. He remembers who Jesus is, the Son of God, “the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God.” He remembers what Jesus did, how He loved him, and gave Himself for him. He looks to the cross and remembers the streams of blood whereby the elect were redeemed, even when they were enemies of God.

He remembers Christ in heaven, enthroned at the right hand of the Father, he loves Him there, and it ravishes his heart to think that God hath highly exalted the once-despised and rejected One, and given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. He pants for the time when the Crucified shall come in His glory and rule the nations as their liege Lord.

He loves Jesus so that he feels he belongs to Him altogether, bought with His blood, redeemed by His power, and comforted by His presence. He delights to know that he is not his own, for he is bought

with a price. And since he loves his King, and loves Him with an ardor unquenchable, for many waters cannot drown his love, neither can the floods quench it, he loves all the King's brethren and servants for the King's sake.

He hails his brethren in arms with hearty affection. He loves the grand old banner of the Gospel. He prays for the wind of the Holy Spirit to expand its furls, that all eyes may behold its beauties. He is steadfast in the faith once delivered to the saints, and rejoices so much at every doctrine of the Gospel that he would gladly lay down his life to preserve it to the world.

Above all, he loves the crown of his King, and the cause of his Master. Oh, could he set the Captain of his salvation higher among men, he would be content to die in the ditch of neglect and scorn. Could he but see the King come to His own, and the Heir of all things loyally acknowledged by His revolted provinces, he would be satisfied whatever might become of himself. His heart is more than loyal, it is full of personal affection for the Chief among ten thousand.

I ask you, brethren, whether it is so with you? Believing, yea, knowing that it is so with many, I would to God it were thus with all. Brethren, I know you love Jesus well, no music sounds to your ears so sweetly as His charming name. No song of choicest minstrel is half as sweet. The very thought of Him with rapture fills your breasts. Assuredly you have one of the first marks of good soldiers, go on, I pray you, to that which lies beyond.

The next characteristic of a good soldier is that *he is obedient to his captain's commands*. He would be no soldier at all who would not take his marching orders from his leader, but must act after his own mind. He would soon be dismissed from service, if not shot, by order of a court martial for crimes which military rule cannot tolerate.

Now, without enlarging on that illustration, let me ask every Christian here, and myself first of all, are we doing all the Master's will? Do we wish to know the Master's will? I should not like that any part of the Scripture should be distasteful to me. I would tremble if there were portions of my Lord's testimony which I feared to read, or found it convenient to forget. It is terrible when men are obliged to pass over certain texts, or else to cut and square them to make them agree with their beliefs.

We should not practice an ordinance merely because our church teaches it, or our parents believed in it. We must read the Scriptures, and search the question for ourselves, or we are not respectful to our Lord. The soldier who did not take the trouble to read the orders of his superior might justly be suspected of mutinous intentions.

Disobedience rankles in any heart where there is carelessness about knowing the Lord's will. Be courageous enough always to look Scripture in the face, it is after all nothing more than your bare duty. Better for us that we changed our sentiments every day in order to be right, than that we held to them obstinately while we had some fear that perhaps we were wrong. To live a life of obedience is a greater matter than some suppose.

Obedience is no second-rate virtue, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "If ye love me"—what saith Jesus, "Go to the stake for Me" or "Preach before kings for Me"? No, neither of these things is expressly selected, but "If ye love me, keep my commandments," as though this were the surest and most accepted test of love. May you thus, then, being loyal to the King, be in the second place obedient to His commands.

The third matter for a good soldier to mind is this, if he be indeed a first-class soldier, worthy of the service, *to conquer will be his ruling passion*. The fight is on, and the soldier's blood is up, and now he feels, "I must drive the enemy from his entrenchment, I must take yonder redoubt. I must plant our conquering standard on the castle of the foe, or I must die. Accursed be the sun if he go down this day and sees me turn my back upon the enemy." He is resolved that he will win or lie cold and stark upon the battlefield.

The Christian man, in order that he may win for Christ the souls of others, may make known Christ's truth, may establish Christ's church on fresh ground, is quite as ready to suffer or die as is the boldest member of the most renowned regiment. To do this he disentangles himself as much as he can from all

other ambitions and aims, “for he that warreth entangleth not himself with the affairs of this life.” With a good soldier of Christ, the master passion is to spread the Gospel, to save souls from perishing, and he would sooner do this and be poor than be rich and neglect it. He would sooner be useful and live unknown than rank among the great ones of the earth and be useless to his Lord.

A truly good soldier of Jesus Christ knows nothing about difficulties except as things to be surmounted. If his Master bids him perform exploits too hard for him, he draws upon the resources of omnipotence, and achieves impossibilities.

Wellington sent word to his troops one night, “Ciudad Rodrigo must be taken tonight.” And what do you think was the commentary of the British soldiers appointed for the attack? “Then,” said they all, “we will do it.” So when our great Captain sends round, as He doth to us, the word of command, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” if we were all good soldiers of the cross, we would say at once, “We will do it.”

However hard the task, since God Himself is with us to be our Captain, and Jesus the Priest of the Most High is with us to sound the trumpet, we will do it in JEHOVAH’s name. May such dauntless resolution fire your breasts, my brethren and sisters, and may you thus prove yourselves “good soldiers of Jesus Christ.”

The passion for victory with the soldier often makes him forget everything else. Before the battle of Waterloo, Picton had had two of his ribs smashed in at Quatre Bras, but he concealed this serious injury, and though suffering intense agony, he rode at the head of his troop, and led one of the great charges which decided the fortunes of the day. He never left his post, but rode on till a ball crushed in his skull and penetrated to the brains. Then in the hot fight the hero fell. How few among us could thus endure hardness for Jesus.

O that we felt we could suffer anything sooner than be turned aside from accomplishing our lifework for Him we love. In that same battle one of our lieutenants, in the early part of the day, had his left forearm broken by a shot. He could not, therefore, hold the reins in his hand, but he seized them with his mouth, and fought on till another shot broke the upper part of the arm to splinters, and it had to be amputated. But within two days there he was, with his arm still bleeding, and the wound all raw, riding at the head of his division.

Brave things have been done amongst the soldiers of our country—O that such brave things were common among the armed men of the church militant! Would to God that in the teeth of suffering we could all persevere in living the holy life He bids us live, and in zealously spreading abroad that glorious Gospel which has saved our souls and which will save the souls of others. Great Master, by Thine own example inspire us with this valor.

I desire to see in this our beloved church, more of you who are resolved that Christ’s Gospel shall conquer this South of London, that it shall conquer the world, that Christ *shall* see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. I long to witness more of that dogged perseverance among Christians which would make them work on and on, even without success, and persevere under every discouragement, until at last their Master shall give them their reward on earth, or else take them away to their reward in heaven. To be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, there must be a passion for victory, and an insatiable greed for setting up the throne of Jesus in the souls of men.

Fourthly, *a good soldier is very brave at a charge*. When the time comes and the orders are given for the good soldier to advance to the attack, he does not wish himself away. Though a perfect hail of hurtling shot whistles all around, and the ranks of the army are thinned, he is glad to be there, for he feels the stern joy that flushes the face in the light of battle, and he only wants to be within arm’s length of the foe and to come to close quarters with him.

So is it with the genuine Christian when his heart is right with God. If he is bidden to advance, let the danger be what it may, he feels he is honored by having such a service allotted to him. But are we all such? I fear not. How many of us are silent about Jesus Christ in private conversation, how little do we show forth our light before men. If we were good soldiers, such as we ought to be, we would select

every favorable opportunity in private as well as in public communion with our fellow men, and prudently but yet zealously press the claims of Jesus Christ and His Gospel upon them. Oh, do this, beloved, and good will come of it.

We should each one be seeking to have his own special work for Jesus, and if no one else were attempting the task we should, like the brave men who rush in to the storming of a battery, carry the flag first and plant it, knowing that there are hundreds of others who will follow the first brave man, who might not be able perhaps to lead the way themselves.

My beloved, may you and I be ready for anything, and bold to bear witness for Christ before a scoffing world. In the pulpits where we preach, in the workshops where we labor, in the markets where we trade, in every company amidst which we are called to move, wherever we may be, may we be brave enough to own our Lord and to uphold His cause.

But this is not all that goes to make a good soldier. *A good soldier is like a rock under attack.* So British soldiers have been, they have stood in solid squares against the enemies' cavalry until their foes have dashed upon them madly, gnashed their teeth, fired in their faces, thrown their guns at them, and yet might just as well have ridden against granite rocks, for our soldiers did not know how to yield, and would not retreat. As fast as one fell, another filled up the gap, and there stood the square of iron defying the rush of the foe.

We want this kind of fixed, resolved, persevering godliness in our churches, and we shall have it if we are good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Alas! too many are exhausted by the zeal at first exhibited. For a time they can reach the highest point, but to continue on, and on, and on, this is too difficult a task for them.

How many young people will join the church, and for a while seem very zealous, and then grow cold! Alas! it is not always the young, there be some among yourselves who were once most diligent in your various forms of service, what doth hinder you that you are not diligent in your Master's business now? Has Christ given you leave to retire into inglorious ease? Does He exempt you from service? Take heed lest you are also exempt from reward.

No, we must through life still maintain our integrity, still resist temptation, still tread the separated path, and withal, still seek the souls of men with undying ardor, with indefatigable earnestness, still wrestling with God for men, and with men for God. Oh, for more of this stern determination to stand, and having done all to stand!

The last mark of a really good soldier of Jesus Christ is that *he derives his strength from on High.* This has been true even of some common soldiers, for religious men when they have sought strength from God have been all the braver in the day of conflict.

I like the story of Frederick the Great. When he overheard his favorite general engaged in prayer, and was about to utter a sneering remark, the fine old man, who never feared a foe, and did not even fear his majesty's jest, said, "Your Majesty, I have just been asking aid from your Majesty's great ally." He had been waiting upon God. This is how Christians get the victory, they seek it from the church's great ally, and then go to the conflict sure that they shall win the day.

He is the best Christian who is the best intercessor. He shall do the most who shall pray the best. In the battle of Salamanca, when Wellington bade one of his officers advance with his troops, and occupy a gap which the Duke perceived in the lines of the French, the general rode up to him and said, "My lord, I will do the work, but first give me a grasp of that conquering right hand of yours." He received a hearty grip, and away he rode to the deadly encounter.

Often has my soul said to her Captain, "My Lord, I will do that work if Thou wilt give me a grip of Thy conquering right hand." Oh, what power it puts into a man when he gets a grip of Christ, and Christ gets a grip of him! Fellowship with Christ is the fountain of the church's strength. Her power did never lie in her wealth, nor in the eloquence of her preachers, nor in aught that comes of man. The strength of the church is divine, and if she fails to draw strength from the everlasting hills, she becomes weak as

water. Good soldiers of Jesus Christ, watch unto prayer, “praying in the Holy Ghost,” for so shall you be strong in the LORD, and in the power of his might.

II. Thus I have in a very poor way described a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Give me a few minutes while I EXHORT YOU TO BE SUCH, and mark you, I shall speak especially to the members of this Christian church.

I exhort you, dear brethren, who are soldiers of Christ, to be good soldiers, because *many of you have been so*. Paul was wont to commend the churches when he could, and I feel I may honestly and from my heart commend many of you, for you have served your Lord and Master well. I know you have nothing whereof to glory, for when you have done all, you are unprofitable servants. But still I do rejoice, and will rejoice when I see the work of the Holy Spirit in you. And I will venture to say that I have seen here instances of apostolic ardor and self-sacrifice such as I have read of in ancient records, but hardly ever expected to see.

There are those in this house this day who will shine as stars forever and ever, for they have turned many to righteousness. Dishonor not your past, I beseech you, fall not from your high standing. “Forward” be your motto. Never think of declining, but rather advance in love to God, and in the ardor of your zeal. Be good soldiers still, and depart not from your first love.

I am sure *there is greater need of good soldiering now than ever*. Ten years ago, or sixteen years ago, when first I addressed you, the power of popery in this land was nothing to what it is now. In those days the Church of England was more generally Protestant, now it is so frequently popish that I may broadly say that now we are afflicted with two popish churches, that of Rome and that of Oxford, the second not one whit better than the first, only more crafty and insidious, inasmuch as it attracts to itself a number of godly and gracious men, who protect the villains who bear a Protestant name and who are doing the Pope’s work.

I grieve to know that the evangelical clergy of England, by their continued union with the Church of England are acting as a shield to the ritualistic or popish party, and giving them every opportunity to work out their schemes for leading the nation back to popery *en masse*.

Around this very spot a battle will have to be fought between the sacramentarians and the lovers of the Gospel. At your very doors the battle is come at last. It was not so till but lately, but here it is, and ye that are men must show your colors, and serve your Master against innumerable and constantly active foes.

You have never failed me. You have always been bold and steadfast, and laborious, and so let it be, for the time requires it. I can see on all hands that many of you young men are being attracted by the worldly amusements which surround us, for our dangers are not only those of popery, but those of the world, the flesh, and the devil. There must be greater earnestness and a deeper-toned piety among you, or the next generation will become unworthy of yourselves, your grief and not your joy. I pray you see to this.

Be good soldiers, for *much depends upon it*. Your country will be blessed in proportion as you are earnest. Nonconformity in England will lose all its power if it loses its godliness. I do not care much for our political strength—I was about to say I am almost indifferent to our political rights—I care for them, but only so much as to occupy a very minor place in my consideration. But our spirituality is the main matter. It is this, alone that can make us a blessing to our country.

Sons of the Puritans, ye must walk with God, or your day is past, ye will be swept away as Esther would have been, who came to the kingdom for the salvation of her nation, if she had not fulfilled the office for which God had exalted her. You have grown in numbers, grown in strength, O that you may grow in grace, love the Gospel better, and love Christ better, for your country needs it, your children need it, yourselves need it. The times are perilous, and yet they are hopeful. By their peril, and by their hopefulness, I beseech you be good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Good soldiers we ought to be, for *it is a grand old cause that is at stake*. It is the kingdom of God, it is the church of Christ, it is the Word, the truth, the doctrine of the Gospel, the crown of Jesus, that are

all at stake. I grant you that none shall ever shake the throne of Jesus, for though “the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing,” yet shall His throne be established.

But we now speak according to the manner of men. God has been pleased to leave this matter to His church, which is the pillar and ground of the truth. Oh then, stand up manfully, and fight earnestly when so much rests upon it! God grant that you may not be as the children of Ephraim, who being armed and carrying bows turned their backs in the day of battle.

I implore you, my brethren, and mostly myself, to be good soldiers of Jesus, when you consider *the fame that has preceded you*. A soldier when he receives his colors finds certain words embroidered on them, to remind him of the former victories of the regiment in which he serves. Look at the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and see the long list of the triumphs of the faithful. Remember how prophets and apostles served God. Recollect how martyrs joyfully laid down their lives. Look at the long line of the reformers and the confessors. Remember your martyred sires and covenanting fathers, and by the grace of God I beseech you walk not unworthy of your noble lineage.

Be good soldiers because of *the victory which awaits you*. Oh, it will be a grand thing to share in the ultimate triumph of Christ, for triumph He will. When all His soldiers shall come back from the war, and the King Himself at their head with the spoils of the victory, when they shall come back to the metropolitan city, to the ivory palaces of the great Captain; when the song is heard, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,” when the question shall be answered, “Who is the King of glory?” by the reply, “The LORD of hosts, the LORD mighty in battle, he is the King of glory,” it will be a glorious thing to have shared the fight, for so surely you shall share the honors of that coronation day.

A crown is prepared for that head though it be now made to ache with care for the cause, a palm branch for that hand which now toils in the fight, silver sandals for those feet which have now to march over weary miles for Christ’s sake, honor and immortality not to be imagined till they are enjoyed, await every faithful soldier of the cross.

Besides, and lastly, if I want another argument to make you good soldiers, *remember your Captain*, the Captain whose wounded hands and pierced feet are tokens of His love to you. Redeemed from going down to the pit, what can you do sufficiently to show your gratitude? Assured of eternal glory by and by, how can you sufficiently prove that you feel your indebtedness?

Up, I pray you now. By Him whose eyes are like a flame of fire, and yet were wet with tears, by Him on whose head are many crowns, and who yet wore the crown of thorns, by Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and yet bowed His head to death for you, resolve that to life’s latest breath you will spend and be spent for His praise. The Lord grant that there may be many such in this church—good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Two or three words and I will close. At this present time I contemplate exhorting you to engage in fresh efforts for Christ. I do not know that you are relaxing, neither have I complaints to make of any, but I would wish that we would commence with renewed vigor this day, if God so wills it. As I myself commence a new year of Sabbaths as to my own age, I desire to see a new era of greater exertion in the cause of Jesus Christ. And in order that it may be successful, let not a single man or woman on the church-roll be missing from his or her post in the spiritual conflict.

It is a remarkable fact that on the eve of a great battle in the Peninsular War the officers read the muster-roll, and noted that “not a man was missing.” They had all good stomach for the fight, and were all there. You that are in the Sabbath school, you that distribute your tracts, you that preach in the street, every man to his post, and if you have no post as yet, find one—let there not be one idler, not one single loiterer, for a single sluggard may mar the work.

Then if we are to be successful let nothing divide us. The motto of one of our most famous regiments embroidered on their banner is, “*Quis separabit.*” Who shall separate us? We are but mortals, and therefore little jealousies may spring up, and among us there may be little causes of personal pique, but brave warriors in the olden times who had fallen out have been known to come together on the eve of

battle and say, “Come, let us be reconciled, we may die tomorrow, besides, we join in common hatred of the foe and love to the king.” Let your peace be unbroken, your union indissoluble, and God will bless you.

To help us to succeed now, let us lay down this one rule, let no low standard of work, or virtue, or spiritual attainment, content any one of us. Let us resolve to be as good Christians as can be beneath the stars, as fond of Christ as human hearts can be, doing and giving as much for Christ as we can do or give, consistently with other duties. Let us spare nothing, and keep back no part of the price. Let there be no Ananias and Sapphira among us, but all be as John, who loved his Lord, and Paul, who counted all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus his Lord.

Next, let me say, *let the present moment be seized*. I should like to saturate this district with a mass of tracts simply teaching the Gospel and protesting against the bastard popery around us. Heaven and earth are being raised around us just now. Our poor are being bribed, the houses of our members are being systematically visited with the view of decoying them from our worship.

We are told that a certain small building used by the Episcopal body is the parish church, and we ought to attend it. I might far more truthfully assert this to be the church of the parish by the choice of a far more numerous body, but I care not to make pretensions which prove nothing.

The true question is—do we follow Christ, and uphold the teachings of Scripture, and if so, our standing is unassailable. Doubtless the word has gone forth that Dissent must be crushed, but if we live near to God, and maintain our zeal, Dissent will rise invincible from every attack.

Foreseeing the gathering storm, it is our consolation that we know where He dwells who is Master of the tempest, and can walk the waters for our help, and calm the sea around the weather-beaten bark. It becomes us now at this present moment to be indefatigable, to put forth all our strength for the truth, even the Lord’s pure Word in doctrine and in ordinance. *Let no man’s heart fail him*. There is no fear of defeat.

Lo, these many years the Lord of hosts has been with us as a church, and He will be still our Helper. We have seen the rise and fall of many who blazed for awhile, but are now quenched in darkness, while we have increased from a handful to this mass. And God who has been our trust, and is still our stay, will not forsake us now. He has not drawn you together, and held you in one body by cords of love, that after all you may prove to be a powerless unwieldy mass of associated Christians. He intends to direct and strengthen you for nobler ends and purposes. God, even our own God, will bless us.

Immanuel, God with us, leads the van. The truth, like the virgin daughter of Zion, shakes her head at boastful error and laughs it to scorn. Let falsehood put on her tawdry garments, and think herself a queen, and say that she shall sit alone, and see no sorrow. Let error come forth in her panoply and wave her flaunting banner before the sun. She draws near her end.

Her armor—what is it? It is but pasteboard, and the lance of truth shall pierce it through and through. Her banner, what is it but a foul rag of the Roman harlot? It shall be laid in the dust. Nay, let error bring forth all her hosts, and let them stand in their serried ranks, and through them the faithful soldiers of Jesus will ride and bow the columns like reeds in the wind.

In these days, the doctrines and traditions of men compass us about, yea, like bees they compass us about, but in the name of the Lord will we destroy them. Only let us have confidence in God, and the victory is sure.

As for the thought of turning back, that can never be endured. A message came to Sir Colin Campbell at the Alma, that Her Majesty’s Guards were falling thick and fast beneath the shot, had they not better retire for a little while into safe quarters? The answer was, “It were better, sir, that every one of Her Majesty’s Guards should lie dead on this battlefield than turn their backs on the enemy.” And it is so.

Let us die, yea, it were to be devoutly wished rather than we lived a coward’s life! Let the preacher first of all be carried to his grave, let him never live to see the shame of this Israel. Let these eyes be sealed in death rather than behold “Ichabod” written on these walls.

No, brethren, it shall not be. You will serve Jesus, you will love Him, and “Onward to victory” shall be your watchword from today. Be more in prayer, for this is the great matter. Seek out, each one your own sphere of action. Give yourselves wholly to it, and if any grow cold or careless, let him remember Jesus saith, “I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

This blessed supping with Jesus will restore you. Though you be like Laodicea, “neither cold nor hot.” Fellowship with Jesus will renew the love of your espousals. Oh, then, my brethren, in Jesus’ name I bid you be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

I have not preached to sinners, but *you* will do that if you catch the spirit of this sermon. There will be many thousands of words to sinners spoken as the result of this exhortation, if God, the Holy Spirit, makes it answer my design. Only this word to those who are not soldiers of Jesus Christ, trust Him now, come now and kiss His silver scepter of grace. He will forgive the rebel, and take him to be His servant. God bless you. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.