

## **“Suffer Hardship With Me ...”**

“... as a good soldier of Christ. No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life that he may please him who enrolled him as a servant” (2 Tim. 2:3f).

Here Paul resorts to a figure seen elsewhere in his writings: likening the Christian to a soldier. True, the specific reference is to Timothy, as a gospel preacher as a soldier, but other passages show that “ordinary Christians” are to equally regard themselves as “soldiers of Christ” who must “arise, and put your armor on”.

Many are the figures that suggest “war” aside from the direct reference in “soldier”. There is a “fight” we are engaged in; we are to “war the good warfare;” we have “armor” to put on; there is a “victory” we hope to attain. Paul tells Timothy that as a soldier of Christ he must be willing to suffer hardship; that he must not entangle himself in the affairs of this life that he may please Christ who has engaged him to battle in his cause. Let us look at other appeals to us.

We are to “*fight the good fight of faith*” (1 Tim. 6:12). We remember that Paul said of himself, “*I have fought the good fight*” (2 Tim. 4:7). Fighting a “*good fight*” demands that we know who our real enemy: we are reminded that we are to “*Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Pet. 5:8). We must withstand the devil with steadfastness of faith. Of this steadfastness we must be “*strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might*” (Eph. 6:10). We must “*stand against the wiles of the devil*” for he is cunning, crafty and attacks us in the places we least expect (Eph. 6:11)! Having done all, we are to stand (Eph. 6:15)!

To stand successfully we must put on the whole armor of God. At least four times in his letters, Paul refers figuratively to the armor Christians must wear. In his earliest reference to such, he told the Thessalonians they were to put on the “*breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation*” (1 Thess. 5:8). In his second letter to the Corinthians, they were reminded of Paul’s suffering and that he had, himself, fought with “*the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left*” (6:7). A little bit later he urged the Romans “*let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light*” (Rom. 13:12). His last reference to our “armor” was more extensive as he wrote Ephesians to “*put on the whole armor of God,*” describing it in detail: “*Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod*

*your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the word of the Spirit which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:13-17).*

We must not forget that *"though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according tot he flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but might before God to the casting down of strongholds;)" (2 Cor. 10:3f).* We must not make the mistake when we are in conflict regarding the faith that we attack the character of our "opponent". It matters not what sort of life a man may live, his bad life will not prove his doctrine to be false nor his good life will not prove his doctrine to be true. Attack the doctrine with the weapons of our warfare -- the sword of the Spirit.

The revelation of John reveals a great battle against the Lord Jesus. John shows this battle against the Lamb was by the beast and all his allies. But, we are comforted regarding this battle for while *"These shall war against the Lamb,"* and *"the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of Lords and king of kings;"* and we are promised *"and they also shall overcome who are with him, called and chosen and faithful"* (Rev. 17:14). Therefore it behooves us all that we not entangle ourselves in the affairs of this world that we may please Him who enrolls us as a soldier!

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