

Subject: A Good Soldier of Jesus Christ

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Here we have a good soldier's last testimony. Paul is prepared to die and enter eternity, but look how he describes it in verse 6. Looking ahead to the time when he would leave this world, Paul described his death as a drink offering poured on the sacrificial lamb before it was laid on the altar (Num. 28:24). This was the logical conclusion to a believer's earthly life because he gives his life as a daily sacrifice to Christ all along the way (Rom. 12:1-2).

Paul also described his death as a departure. The word means an unloosing or untying. For a Christian death is not the end. It is a departure, like leaving on a trip and heading for the ultimate destination. Death is not destruction, but a separation of the soul from the body. William Barclay says there is no passage in the New Testament that has more vivid pictures than this passage.

When Erasmus was growing old he said: "I am a veteran, and have earned my discharge, and must leave the fighting to younger men."

Looking back, Paul further describes his life in three ways:

- He is a soldier who has fought a good fight
- He is a runner who has finished his race
- He is a steward who had kept the faith.

We will focus our message on the first analogy of a soldier who has fought a good fight, but first we will look briefly at the other two analogies because they are so important as models for us to follow:

As a runner Paul entered the race and by faith and perseverance he finished the course that Christ laid out for him. ***Hebrews 12:1-2*** ¹ *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,* ² *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. We called to run the race and finish the course set before us.*

As a steward or manager Paul guarded the treasure of Gospel truth revealed to him. In his teaching and preaching and evangelism Paul did not and would not compromise the truth. He declared the whole counsel of God. We are called to keep the faith once for all delivered to the saints in the written Word of God. Now let's focus on the third image. Paul said that he fought a good fight.

A SOLDIER OF CHRIST IS IN A TOUGH BATTLE

1 Timothy 6:12 *Fight the good fight of faith.* The people of this world may wonder if this is a fight worth fighting for. This is always a question worth asking. Was it worth it to fight in Vietnam? Was it worth it to fight in Iraq? In Afghanistan? The question now, is it worth it to fight Isis around the world?

Is the fight of faith worth fighting? Some say no. I say yes. Paul says yes. He says it is the good fight of faith. All the apostles and the saints through the ages say yes it is worth fighting the good fight of faith.

It's not an easy fight. This world is not a playground. It is a battleground. Soldiers are enlisted and trained to fight. As soldiers of Christ we need to have a battlefield mentality and not a barracks mentality.

2 Timothy 2:3 *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*

2 Timothy 4:5 *But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*

Paul understood something about hardship and afflictions.

2 Corinthians 4:8-11 ⁸ *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;* ⁹ *Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;* ¹⁰ *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.* ¹¹ *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

2 Corinthians 6:3-5 ³ *Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:* ⁴ *But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,* ⁵ *In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings.*

Paul was not always popular and his life was not usually very comfortable, but that didn't really matter to him. He wanted to be faithful. That's all that mattered to him.

A SOLDIER OF CHRIST FACES DANGEROUS ENEMIES

We learn a lot about our enemies in the Scripture. **2 Timothy 2:4** *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.* This speaks of enemy number one, the world. ("the affairs of this life"). This is a real and present danger.

2 Timothy 4:9-11 ⁹ *Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:* ¹⁰ *For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.* ¹¹ *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.* Will you be like Demas or will you be like Luke and Mark?

Our second enemy is the flesh. **1 Peter 2:11** *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*

Our third enemy is Satan. **1 Peter 5:8-9** ⁸ *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:* ⁹ *Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.* Remember, you are not alone in this battle.

A SOLDIER OF CHRIST SEEKS THE LORD'S APPROVAL

Soldiers earn medals and awards for faithful service. They wear them and display them, and rightfully so. On Veteran's Day, we don't honor draft dodgers and deserters.

The Lord is the righteous judge. He always does what is right in judging both unbelievers and believers, according to what they deserve. The Bible teaches that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, but rewards is based on faithful service and the works we do for the Lord. ***1 Corinthians 15:58*** *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

Paul looked around at his circumstances and saw his death was immanent. He looked back and had no regrets. He had fought a good fight. He had finished his course. He had kept the faith. Then Paul looked ahead to the time when he would hear Jesus say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” That’s the life of a good soldier who showed us how to live and how to die.

When you repent and trust Christ as your Lord and Savior, you enlist as a soldier of Christ. Every Christian is a soldier of Christ. Are you a soldier? Are you a good and faithful soldier?