**WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN - 3**

**A Christian is…A Soldier**

***ACTS 11:26***

**INTRODUCTION** - As the New Testament was being written, the Roman Empire had a strong army whose presence was felt throughout. It was not uncommon to see soldiers in various cities and to hear of their wars and work. Thus an illustration of a soldier would resonate with the common people.

In examining what it means to be a Christian, there are several references in the New Testament to soldiers. We learn many lessons from soldiers by these references. In our lesson today we want to address the Christian as…a Soldier

 **I. We are at war**

1. ***IT is a spiritual warfare*** –

[**John 18:36**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2018.36) – Jesus said that His ***kingdom is not of this world. If it were His servants would fight***. Prior to this, when Peter tried to fight for Him He said, ***“Put away your sword”* (**[**John 18:10-11**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2018.10-11)**)**
[**Eph. 6:12**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Eph.%206.12) - ***“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”***

[**2 Corinthians 10:3–6**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Corinthians%2010.3%E2%80%936) **-**  **“*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*”**

b.   It is a battle for our mind, it is a battle for the souls of others – both those who have never obeyed the gospel and those in danger of falling away, it is a battle for truth to prevail, it is a battle for unity and purity in the church. Nevertheless, it is a battle, just as real as any human war.

c.  And as such, we need to prepare for this battle by becoming good soldiers.

 **II. The Christian Soldier**

a. ***We are described as soldiers*** –
[**2 Timothy 2:3**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Timothy%202.3)**, “*You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*”**
[**Phil. 2:25**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Phil.%202.25)**, “*Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;*”**

b. ***We are engaged in and need to fight***  –
[**1 Timothy 6:12**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Timothy%206.12) – Paul told Timothy to **“*fight the good fight of faith*”**

We need to be militant (not passive, but willing to go out and engage our enemy).
[**Jude 3**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Jude%203) - calls for us to contend for the faith
[**James 4:7**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/James%204.7) - calls for us to resist the devil and he will flee
[**1 Cor. 16:13**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Cor.%2016.13) - calls for us to stand fast – a description of a sentry holding his ground.

c.  ***Know your enemy*** – One thing people learn in the military is the importance of knowing your enemy. Recognize enemy equipment and tactics. That is what you prepare for.
[**2 Cor. 2:11**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Cor.%202.11) - Paul warns to be alert lest Satan take advantage of us, “for we are not ignorant of his devices.”
**1 Peter 5:8-9** - The call to be sober and vigilant is a call to be watchful of Satan. Peter describes him as a roaring lion seeking to devour. We are to resist him.

d.   ***Put on the gospel armor*** –

[**Ephesians 6:10-18**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ephesians%206.10-18) **i**s a passage that describes our armor. In times past we have discussed each piece in detail. Here I just make mention that our armor is NOT the physical “panoply” of a soldier, but attitudes that will defend us. We need to put on – truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, hope and the gospel itself. These are our “weapons”
ONE observation to be made here – **Vs. 11 tells us, “*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*.” Vs. 13 says, “*Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*”** We must wear the WHOLE armor. To leave off any piece of it is to make yourself vulnerable in that area. We need the “whole counsel of God” both in word and application!

e.  ***Our weapon*** –

[**Ephesians 6:17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ephesians%206.17) - **“*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*”** In describing our armor, the uniform is mostly defensive. But our only offensive weapon is the word of God.

[**2 Cor. 10:4-5**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Cor.%2010.4-5) - we are told the weapons of our warfare – His word will help us defeat the enemy.
[**Heb. 4:12**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Heb.%204.12) **- “*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*”**

f.   ***Our Communication*** – an integral part of any successful military campaign is effective communication. Efforts need to be coordinated. Similarly we need communication in our spiritual battle.
The word of God is how He communicates with us.
Prayer is how we communicate with God

[**Eph. 6:18**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Eph.%206.18) as Paul concludes describing our armor he says, **“*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*”**
[**Phil. 4:6**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Phil.%204.6) - calls for us to be anxious for nothing but with prayers and supplications, we let our requests be known to God.
[**Matt. 5:44**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt.%205.44) as Jesus calls for us to love our enemies He says**, “*pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you*.”**  There’s something about leaving your troubles with God and letting Him take care of it.

[**1 Peter 5:7**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Peter%205.7) - calls for us to cast all our cares upon Him (with humility).
[**Romans 12:17-21**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%2012.17-21) - calls for us to repay no one evil for evil and to let God take care of the ungodly.

g.  ***Our devotion*** –

[**2 Tim. 2:3-4**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Tim.%202.3-4)**, “*You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*”**
Soldiers are soldiers first. While we live in a time where our army volunteers there is the realization that serving as a soldier is first. The reserves mean that you can be called up at any moment and you leave family, job, your plans and anything else to defend your country. In this time of conflict, our reserves are well aware of that and they serve at great sacrifice.
Spiritually, we need to voluntarily possess this attitude in service to God. We should be willing to endure hardships for the cause of Christ (consider the example of Paul).

[**Matt. 6:33**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt.%206.33)**,** [**10:34-39**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%2010.34-39) – Our first goal is to please him. Everything else factors in with that in mind. That is why the true soldier of Christ is a Christian in his home, in his community, toward his government, at his job and among his brethren.

[**Luke 14:26-33**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Luke%2014.26-33) – Jesus speaks of the cost of discipleship, and weighing the cost before you begin.

 **III. The final battle**

a.  ***The final battle*** – There is great debate about what the interpretation of Revelation involves. There are outright false views, but even beyond that there are details that we are left to speculate as to their actual meaning. BUT one point emphasized toward the end of the book is a great battle between the forces of good and evil. Revelation 19 records a battle between Christ (on a white horse – vs. 11-16) and His army from heaven. They meet the beast and his armies who have gathered for war (vs. 17-19 - probably at a place called Armageddon in [Rev. 16:16](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rev.%2016.16)). Vs. 20 says that the beast and false prophet are captured and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone and their army was defeated. Cast into the bottomless pit for 1000 years Satan is temporarily released and then ultimately defeated (20:7-10). That’s it. There is NO reign on earth, etc. BUT the point, regardless of the speculation over who the beast and dragon are is this – WE WILL WIN! As soldiers of Christ, we want to be on His side as the outcome of eternity depends on it.

b.  [**2 Tim. 4:6-8**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Tim.%204.6-8) – AT the conclusion of his life, Paul said, “**I have fought the good fight”** and thus he awaited his crown of righteousness.

c.   [**Rom. 8:31-39**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rom.%208.31-39) - If God is for us, who can be against us. Paul speaks of the surety of victory in Him. In vs. 37 we read, ***“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”***

**CONCLUSION** –

A Christian is a soldier of the cross.

It is important that we know whose side we are on and that we declare it.

Are you in the Lord’s army if not then you can enlist today?

We do this by obeying the gospel and thereby becoming His children.

If you are in the Lord’s army, how faithfully are you serving?