

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” — John 12:21

Am I A Soldier Of The Cross?

by Dee Bowman

Soldiering is hard work. You have to learn the real meaning of authority, putting your trust in the commander to make the decisions that are best for all concerned. You have to learn hardiness and dedication, making sure that your service is first rate. You have to work at the job, knowing that it is not only your responsibility you are bearing, but that others are dependent on you as well. Paul uses this figure in 2 Timothy 2. “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 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. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules”

Be strong. Being strong is first of all a mental action. You have to decide to do it. If you would be strong in Jesus Christ, you must study to do so. That means you have to keep a close watch on your spiritual body and see to it that it is getting the right nourishment, the right kinds of spiritual food. If you would be strong you have to get a goodly amount of exercise. Exercise retards lethargy, encourages vitality, brings a sanguine spirit. Attending the services like you ought, getting involved in private meditation, learning the value of prayer. All of these things are actually spiritual exercises. Do you get enough nourishment, enough spiritual exercise to be a good soldier?

Teach others. There is no army that does not have people whose duty is to pass on the instructions. There must be intense efforts to enlist others into the service of the Lord. In our case, this activity is not limited to a few, but is the charge of everyone in the army. It is our duty—yea, our privilege—to recommend the gospel message of salvation to any and all who will hear. We are all recruiters in the army of the Lord.

Endure hardness. Armies exist for two purposes: to fight and to protect. That means the soldiers must endure whatever comes along. Difficulties are part of soldiering and we must learn to endure them. The army of the Lord is no place for the frightful or the timid. It is no place for the tentative and poorly motivated. It requires the best we have to offer to win. Our adversary, the devil, walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). We have to learn to watch for him; and when we encounter him, we must be prepared to resist him so that he retreats and flees from us.

Remain committed. We are not civilians. We are a called out people, responsible for doing the work of God, for conquering a world full of sin and ungodliness. You are part. So am I. We must let the world know that we are not of the world (Col. 3:1-2), that we have a higher mission, a more noble cause, one to which we are totally committed and from which we will not be deterred. We cannot afford to become involved with the world when we have so noble a cause to champion. Our focus must remain strong, our faith solid, our dedication immovable. Commitment means separation from the world and its allurements in preference for the hard life of the soldier of Christ.

Strive lawfully. Those that comprise the army must all be dedicated to the same stratagem, committed to the same plan. Just as with an athletic contest, there are rules to follow. You have to stay in your place and do your work. Some duties—duties like watchfulness, personal training, keeping equipment in good working order, and a host of others—are common to all, but some are particular. Each man must do his part—bear his own burden (Gal. 6:2) or the whole is not what it should be. If each one does not follow the rules, he places the whole army in jeopardy.

Put on all the armor. Ephesians 6 tells us what the captain of our salvation requires as the accouterments of our warfare. Notice them quickly. There must be a girdle of truth so that all the other implements of war may be closely attached and ready. The breastplate of righteousness is necessary for the protection of our vital parts. The feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel so that they don't become tired, weary. And, for the protection of our whole being, the shield of faith. Finally, our head is protected by the helmet of salvation and our offensive weapon is sword of the spirit, the powerful word of God.

As we go out into the world this week, let us—each one of us—make sure he is ready for what will come. Let us be good soldiers. Ask yourself this question today: Am I a soldier of the cross?

Some of the Desires of Those who Follow Christ

by R. J. Evans

The word "desire" involves a strong feeling of wanting something or wishing for something to happen (Webster). I find it interesting that there are 154 references to the word desire, 53 references to the word desired, and 42 references to the word desires in the Bible (NKJV). Some of them are in reference to what God desires for man. Many of them pertain to man and his desires---some good and some bad.

In a brief manner, let's consider some of the desires of those who are faithful children of God:

1. The desire to be lovers of God more than lovers of pleasure and the things of the world (Matt. 22:37; 2 Tim. 3:4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).
2. The desire to honor and obey God even if it causes sacrifice and suffering (Phil. 3:7-16).
3. The desire to seek the kingdom or church and God's righteousness first, before, and above everything else (Matt. 6:33).
4. The desire to deny ourselves and carry our own cross daily (Matt. 16:24; Lk. 9:23).
5. The desire to see all things from God's eternal perspective (Matt. 6:19-21).
6. The desire to learn and profit from God's correction and discipline (Heb. 12:4-11).
7. The desire to focus on others more than on ourselves (Phil. 2:3-4).
8. The desire to come to the time when we can depart from this life and forever be with Christ (Phil. 1:21-16).

We conclude with one of God's greatest desires. For it is He "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).



Read your Bible daily

No Time or Place to Quit

by R. J. Evans

"While I live I will praise the Lord; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being" (Psa. 146:2). The above words of the Psalmist reveal his plans to faithfully serve the Lord as long as he lived. No doubt, he realized that faithfully serving the Lord brings many blessings and joys now, as well as the eternal reward in heaven later. To be a child of God who faithfully serves the Lord is more important than anything else one can do in this life. Yet, there are some Christians who are not always faithful to the Lord. In my own mind, I can think of a large number who I've known through the years who have fallen away and no longer serve God.

It is easy serving God when all is going well. But everyone needs to realize that self-denial and cross-bearing are involved (Matt. 16:12, 15). The Apostle Paul tells us that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

A child of God must be so careful not to allow the attractions of this world to get in his way (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Therefore, all Christians must be sincere and serious about serving God, as well as dependent upon Him for strength. The wise man stated, "If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small" (Prov. 24:10).

Jesus had so many factors working against Him during His time on this earth, but He never fainted. Men despised and rejected Him (Isa. 53:3), and ultimately crucified Him. While on earth He quoted the words which had been prophesied concerning Him in Psalm 69:4 — "They hated Me without a cause" (Jn. 15:25). But through it all, in His prayer to His Father, He could say, "I have finished the work which you have given Me to do" (Jn. 17:4). Nothing ever caused Him to give up and quit!

Jesus was faithful all the way because He had a Cause to live and die for— "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God" (Heb. 10:9). It is for the same Cause that faithful Christians are assured— "that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight" (Heb. 13:20-21). Moreover, it was doing His Father's will that concerned Jesus the most. He stated, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (Jn. 6:38). We should have the same desire—to always obey and do the will of God.

May we always faithfully trust and obey God so that nothing will ever hinder or stop us. There is just too much at stake. There is no time nor place to quit! "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).