

*"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.

### Wear Masks

Today's

### Schedule

### The Lord's Day

**8:00 - Assembly**

Parking lot - Canopy

**9:15 - Assembly**

Parking lot - Canopy

**10:30 - Assembly**

Parking lot - Canopy

**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?

## Breaking Bad Habitats

by Brent Moody

In the dictionary, the word habit is followed by words like habitat, habitation, habitual, and habitude. These all stem from the same Latin word habere. Our word habit comes directly from the word habere which means, “to hold, possess, have, and handle.” The Latin word habitere, which is a derivative of habere, means “to dwell.” It is from that word that we get our English word habitat.

It is not surprising that these words are so closely related. What we hold, possess, have, and handle is directly influenced by where we live. In other words, our habits are, often, a direct result of our habitat.

The American Heritage College Dictionary defines habitat in the following way: “The place in which a person or thing is most likely to be found.” Think for just a second

about these two questions: First, where is it that you are likely to be found? Second, does that have any impact on the habits you have developed?

Paul had this idea in mind when he said, “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’” (1 Cor. 15:33). If you are likely to be found with “evil company,” you will likely develop evil habits. The environment you put yourself in will have a profound impact on the way you live.

Although we have some level of control over our environment, we are not always able to choose our surroundings. Our most influential habitat, in my opinion, is the home. Unfortunately, we have no control over the home we are born into. Sadly, many children are heading in the wrong direction because of the influences found in their home. Home life has a major impact on the rest of our lives. Therefore, there is great need for positive influences in the home. It is from the home that we develop many of our habits.

Shortly after being married, my eyes were opened to the fact that I had developed many habits while living in my parents home; for example, my family never put ketchup in the refrigerator, Katie's family did; my family never put the dish drainer in the sink, Katie's family did. At first, those little habits were hard to break, and some of them still are. She or I will say, “that is not how my family did it.” I believe this problem is a common one. Most families have a way that they do things. They form habits.

If the home is so influential with little things like where the ketchup goes and where to put the dish drainer, imagine what kind of impact it has on a family when they sing hymns, read the Bible, and pray together regularly. That will, without a doubt, have an impact on each member of the family. Conversely, imagine the impact on a family when all things spiritual are ignored in the home.

We must come to realize that the environment present in the home will produce habits in its inhabitants. The home should be a place that is conducive for developing good, godly habits. Establish a godly home and good habits will, most likely, be formed by those dwelling within its walls. Hopefully, your godly habits will be passed along to your children and grandchildren. Your influence might cause this cycle to continue for generation after generation. If you are not careful, your influence might lead your family away from God. With that in mind, how would you describe the condition of your home? Remember, godly habits are formed within godly homes.