

Session 10

Role of Men in the Church

Man as Soldier - David

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s enemies.” Ephesians 6:10

“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs – he wants to please his commanding officer.”

II Timothy 2:4

“Arise, O Lord! Deliver me, O my God! For you have struck all my enemies on the jaw; you have broken the teeth of the wicked.” Psalm 3:7

- I. Man has lost his identity as a soldier in our country today.
 - A. In the United States (until very recently) we have witnessed a trend during which most men have been isolated from the military.
 1. We abolished the compulsory draft many years ago.
 2. Service in the military is not considered a step along the road to adulthood but rather a diversion or inconvenience.
 3. The reduction in size of the military has decreased the likelihood that we have any significant contact with military personnel.
 4. Reports of the military on the news and from other sources give us little insight into the lives of current soldiers (we are exposed more to the lives of soldiers in past wars, such as WWII). The Gulf War was a brief exception to this trend.
 5. Attractions to the military (until recently) have been adventure, career training and travel, not the honor of fighting for one’s country.
 - B. Much about our perceptions of military life contradict our societal values and expectations.
 1. We are not familiar with nor attracted to the strict discipline of the military.
 2. We find few causes for which we are willing to sacrifice our own self interests (much less our lives).
 3. We are not attracted to the hierarchy of the military (we don’t like submitting our power to others, saluting others).
 4. We are not attracted to being it into a mold, to being uniform as well as wearing uniforms.
 - C. Our most typical contact with the military is through the “blockbuster movie” which places the soldier and the life of the military into a fantasy world.
 - D. Until recently, it was not clear that we had “enemy”. Today we do realize we have enemies, but the enemy is not clearly seen (he or she may be thousands of miles away or living down the street).

- E. Our enemies don't fight like we expect an enemy army to fight (we are not threatened by a massive ground invasion or even a massive missile attack). Therefore it is unclear how we are to fight back.
 - F. The nature of war today does not call up the images of "manly virtue and courage" but rather of sophisticated technology.
 - 1. Wars are played out on computer screens, with avoidance of a nuclear holocaust or total victory the outcome.
 - 2. Wars are viewed as safe wars (we did not lose one soldier in combat during the conflict in Kosovo).
 - G. Women have (rightly in my opinion) joined the armed services and work side by side with men in many endeavors. Being a soldier is no longer considered "man's work." exclusively.
- II. Man has lost his identity as a soldier in the church.
- A. The embattled Christian, taking refuge in the church from a hostile world, fighting for the cause of Christ, is quite foreign and frequently repulsive to the modern day church. We do not view ourselves at war.
 - 1. "Onward Christian Soldiers" is not a popular song today.
 - 2. We occasionally hear lessons on spiritual warfare, yet these are infrequent.
 - 3. We do not view our neighbors as our enemies (after all, we view ourselves as "One Nation Under God"). If there are enemies, they are a few (perhaps dangerous and well organized) fanatics, usually living many miles away.
 - B. We do not typically view ourselves, as Christians, at war. When we do, our image is a fight against a general evil in the world which is separated enough from us (usually) that the evil is not that much of a direct threat (such as a particular political philosophy). This image does not capture the battlefield mentality of the New Testament writers.
 - 1. "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with...have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we are ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete." II Corinthians 10:3-7
 - 2. "Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring – those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus." Revelation 12:17
 - C. When we do "fight", we are frequently fighting against a brother or sister with whom we have a doctrinal disagreement
 - 1. Why do we like to fight among ourselves?
 - 2. Why do we treat one another as the enemy when we face a great enemy in the world?

III. David, a soldier for God.

- A. David was a warrior from the beginning.
 - 1. When he offered to face Goliath, he reminded King Saul that “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it...killed it.” I Samuel 17:34-36
 - 2. David shows no fear in facing the giant Goliath face to face “The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” I Samuel 17:37
- B. David finds himself in a fight almost from the beginning with King Saul. I Samuel 18:1-9.
 - 1. “from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David...Saul had a spear in his hand and hurled it, saying to himself, ‘I’ll pin David to the wall’.” I Samuel 18:8, 9.
 - 2. David spends much of his early life as a fugitive.
- C. David eventually becomes Israel’s greatest king primarily because he becomes Israel’s greatest warrior.
 - 1. He captures Jerusalem and establishes the capital there. II Samuel 5:7
 - 2. He achieves many military victories and enlarges the kingdom. II Samuel 8, 10
- D. Because he was a warrior, he was not selected to build the temple. Solomon, his son, tells Hiram, “You know that, because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the Name of the Lord his God until the Lord put his enemies under his feet. But now the Lord my God has given me peace on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster.” I Kings 5:3, 4
- E. David exhibits the spirit of a soldier in the Psalms, a soldier who depends upon the might of the Lord.
 - 1. “Contend, O Lord, with those who contend against me; fight against those who fight against me...arise and come to my aid.” Psalm 35:1-3
 - 2. “The wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright. But their swords will pierce their own hearts, and their bows will be broken.” Psalm 37:14, 15
 - 3. “They band together against the righteous and condemn the innocent to death. But the Lord has become my fortress...He will repay them for their sins...the Lord our God will destroy them.” Psalm 94:21-23
- F. Paul continues this theme of the Christian soldier in the New Testament.
 - 1. “but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sins at work within my members.” Romans 7:23
 - 2. “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.” II Corinthians 10:4

3. "Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight." I Timothy 1:18
4. "No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs – he wants to please his commanding officer." II Timothy 6:12
5. "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." Ephesians 6:10-18
 - a. The belt of truth.
 - b. The breastplate of righteousness.
 - c. Feet of readiness with the gospel of peace.
 - d. The shield of faith.
 - e. The helmet of salvation.
 - f. The sword of the Spirit – the word of God

IV. Men as soldiers of Christ.

- A. Men need to take on the mentality of a soldier of Christ.
 1. Men are in a battle with sin, both within ourselves and against the evil one in the world.
 2. Men must realize that one cannot enter a battle unless Christ is the first priority.
 3. Men must count the cost of becoming a Christian before enlisting in the army of the Lord.
 4. Men must undergo "basic training" in order to fight the good fight.
 5. Men must take up arms when needed.
- B. Men must put on the full armor of God. They must be prepared.
 1. The belt of truth.
 - a. We live in a world where truth has become relative. "You believe what you want and I'll believe what I want." It is not politically correct to say, "I firmly believe that I am right and you are wrong." Yet Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6 Jesus is not relative nor ambiguous!
 - b. Many of us cannot clearly state what we believe and what we don't. Not speaking just of doctrines such as, "I believe that women should never speak in a Bible class." If asked, "Does God really love us if he allows a tragedy such as the recent terrorist attacks?", we have difficulty answering.
 - c. Many of us frankly do not know scripture.
 2. The breastplate of righteousness – None of us is perfect. We have sinned and continue to sin. Grace saves us from our sin. Yet if we have the mentality of the soldier, we will realize that we must "be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:11
 3. Feet of readiness.

- a. We must “be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” I Peter 3:15.
- b. We must “be prepared to do any good work.” II Timothy 2:21
- 4. The shield of faith – We must, like Abraham, against all hope, in hope believe (Romans 4:18). Abraham the good soldier, “Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead...Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God.” Romans 4:20
- 5. The helmet of salvation – We must, like David in the midst of his most discouraging times, praise God. “How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you...In the shelter of your presence you hide them...Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.” Psalm 31:19-24
- 6. The sword of the Spirit – We live in a time when we do not give the power of God its due credit, either the power within us or the power of God to make His will fact in the world around us.

VI. The church as the army of God.

Every congregation takes on an identity, probably multiple identities. We are a family, a community center, a place of celebration (at times not unlike a sports event), a hospital for the spiritually (and physically) sick, a refuge for the weary. We must also take on the identity of an army base, a training camp, a battalion of soldiers for Christ.

- A. Becoming a soldier often involves some symbolism. Perhaps we should encourage some symbolism of being a soldier for Christ
 - 1. A wrist band with the letters “WWJD”.
 - 2. A Bible in our hands.
- B. Soldiers of Christ do not so much “sell” the faith as they contend for the faith. Though we are to be gentle with the world and remain at peace with those around us, how might we contend for the faith?
- C. Soldiers fight in order to bring peace to the world. This appears to be a paradox. The soldier for Christ must be a soldier who brings peace and the church as the army of God must be both peace making and peace keeping.

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