

Onward Christian Soldier

“And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago” (2 Corinthians 8:10).

As we saw in the previous lesson, it is very important for every child of God to understand that he is needed to fulfill the ministry requirements of the Church. It is important for each Christian to recognize his own importance. On the other hand, it is also important for each Christian to recognize that the job is much bigger than the individual. Each of us is just a tiny part in our God’s great master plan of redemption. The corporate Church is charged with taking the gospel to all the world (Matthew 24:14) and the needs of that mission must supersede all our personal needs or desires. Every thing we do, every decision we make, must take into account that greater mission—the great commission (Matthew 28:19–20).

I. Check Your Equipment

God has a battle plan to wrest this earth away from Satan and bring it back under His complete jurisdiction. You have become a soldier in His army. These discipleship lessons have been an important part of your training and you are now ready to enter the battle. But first you must check your equipment. The Lord has provided the following checklist for your protection.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:10–18).

If you study the passage above, you will notice that there is a protective device for every part of your body except for your back. Take special note of the last verse. The protective device from your knees to your ankles is obviously prayer. Also, you dare not run away from the battle because your back is then exposed. You should also notice that you have only one offensive weapon, the Word of God. You need to be very familiar with your Bible and to memorize many helpful verses.

Now ask yourself the following questions:

A. Who or what is the enemy?

Verse 12 tells us that people are never our enemy. Sometimes it seems like a particular person is causing us a problem in our walk with God. However, this verse assures us that person is only a tool used against us in the greater spiritual battle. The enemies are in the spiritual realm of the “rulers of the [spiritual] darkness of this world.”

B. Are my loins girt about with truth?

You must know the truth regarding spiritual issues. You must know correct doctrine (Jude 3). Also, you cannot compromise yourself by being less than truthful in your dealings with others. You must be willing to be painfully honest. You must tell the truth even when it will hurt you physically. The truth provides spiritual protection against greater hurt.

John 8:32

C. Am I wearing the breastplate of righteousness?

Your life must be clean from sin. If you are still living in some open sin, you have no witness of the goodness and grace of God in your life. You are defenseless in the spiritual warfare. Examine your life and if you find sin in it, purge that sin out of your life.

2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Corinthians 11:28; 1 Corinthians 5:7

D. Are my feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace?

You need to be prepared to present the gospel every time you get an opportunity. The first nine memory verses that you received with these lessons are adequate preparation. If you have not faithfully memorized them, you should begin immediately to do that. This way, you will know exactly where to turn in your Bible to show someone else the way of salvation. Also, you will be able to lead someone to Christ whether you have a Bible with you or not.

James 5:20; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 22–23

E. Do I have the shield of faith?

We saw in lesson 14 that we need not be intimidated by the philosophies of this world. Because the world generally believes a thing doesn't make it the truth. However, we can believe everything that our Bible tells us about life and living. This complete confidence in the words of God is our shield of faith. We must not let the arguments of the world, no matter how cleverly phrased, lead us away from the truths found in the Word of God.

Romans 15:13; 1 Timothy 1:19; 6:20–21; 2 Timothy 2:18

F. Do I have the helmet of salvation?

It is important to understand that a person can believe he or she is saved without actually being saved. You can accept the concept of salvation without accepting the Savior. If you cannot recall a time or a place or a particular set of circumstances when you repented of your sins and asked God for salvation, you probably are not yet saved. When you were saved you became a new creature in Christ Jesus. Can your life be divided into two distinct segments of lost and saved? If you have not yet received Jesus Christ as your Savior you are headed for eternity in hell. You must take care of this situation immediately. If you need help in this area, refer back to lesson one or to a Little Red book tract or write and ask this ministry for help.

2 Corinthians 13:5

G. Am I skilled in using the sword of the Spirit?

As we noted, your only offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. You need to become very familiar with its usage. You should read it from cover to cover, again and again for the rest of your life. It takes only 30–45 minutes a day to read your Bible through once a year. You should memorize all the names of the books of the Bible in their proper order. You should ask the Holy Ghost to guide you into all truth whenever you read your Bible. All of these other devices mentioned will keep you safe, but becoming skilled with the sword of the Spirit will make you strong.

Hebrews 5:12–14

H. Do I pray always?

You should try to always be in an attitude of prayer. Always keep that line of communication with God open. You can whisper a prayer for help in every decision you make every day of your life. You must also set aside a time every day specifically for prayer and nothing else. This will help you to put on all the armor mentioned in this lesson most effectively.

II. Understand the Battle Plan

There have been different battle plans for different ages but the battle plan for the Church Age has been clearly spelled out in the New Testament. Our Lord gave a set of final instructions to His disciples, and by association to His church, before He ascended. They are neatly summarized in the following passages.

“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:46–48).

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19–20).

We can glean several important principles from these instructions.

A. Be witnesses unto Him

These verses show that we are to proclaim the doctrines of repentance and remission of sins to the whole world. The biblical examples show that this was done at three levels.

1. Person to person

We all should be ready, willing, and able to proclaim the gospel to those we come in contact with on a daily basis.

2. Through the normal function of the local church

A church may do many good things for social improvement, or for moral improvement, or whatever need it may see. But the first priority, the primary emphasis must be evangelical. The number one purpose of the local church is to win others to Christ, primarily through preaching the gospel as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:21, “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

3. Through mass evangelism

The book of Acts gives a number of examples where many came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ through preaching to large gatherings of lost people. We hold crusades and public rallies today often with similar results.

Acts 2:4–41; Acts 13:44–48; Acts 17:18–34

B. Disciple those you have won to Christ

Leading people to the Lord and then abandoning them is like throwing someone into the lake and assuming they will learn how to swim. It is your duty according to the verses quoted above to teach them all that our Lord has commanded us. Too many new Christians have been let down in this area and it has led to a severe weakening of the Body of Christ. We must all do our part to stop the bleeding in this area.

C. Develop leadership

The first two points can be done at the individual level. Developing leadership, however is a responsibility of the local church. Properly disciplined Christians should be encouraged to move into ministry. As they continue to grow, God may lead some to move on and start a new work somewhere else. This is how the Church of God grows most rapidly. You may never reach this level of leadership, but someone you win and disciple may. You may become a “grandparent in the Lord” many times over because you are willing to do what God asks of you.

III. Into the Battle

Now that you are properly equipped and understand the battle plan, you are ready to enter the battle. There is, however, a final set of warnings you should give heed to.

A. March in unison

It is very important that you don't undercut the work of others that have gone before you or impede their efforts in any way. You will understand this concept better the first time it happens to you. Many times a Christian will spend much time witnessing to a lost person and feel that he is making progress. Then another Christian will come along and tell that person he has been listening to a lot of false or incorrect doctrine. The end result is that the lost person loses trust in both of them and rejects the gospel completely. Don't you ever be responsible for someone losing faith in the Word of God!

B. Hold your position

When you finally enter the battle, I guarantee that you will immediately be opposed by the spiritual forces of darkness that we saw in point I above. Things will happen that will discourage you. Things will happen that will make it seem much easier to just give up and forget about it. Don't give up! The Lord is allowing Satan to test your spiritual resolve. Look at these trials as a chance to gain an early spiritual victory. If you will stand up for your Lord, you will see Him stand up for you (Hebrews 13:5). The more you overcome these trials, the less you will have to face them (James 4:7).

C. Hand-to-hand combat

For the most part, you will be involved in hand to hand combat. You will deal with lost people one-on-one, face-to-face. You have been prepared through taking these lessons for most of the attacks you will face, but each individual you deal with may present a slightly different twist on things. You cannot deal with him in your own strength. Always commit your efforts to the Lord in prayer before and after you speak to someone about Him. Remember, He has sent the Comforter to guide you into all truth.

John 16:13–15; John 14:16–18

D. The occasional bomb

Sometimes you will do everything right and seem to have won a victory only to see it come to nothing. For example, you may tell someone about eternal life through Jesus Christ and they will gladly and willingly pray a prayer of repentance. Shortly after, you may use that person as an example when witnessing to another person only to have him deny that it ever happened. People will initially accept the Lord for a variety of reasons, but it won't always be accompanied by true repentance. Sometimes people say the prayer as if it were some kind of magical incantation for luck or as if it were a way of taking out "fire" insurance. God doesn't listen to the words so much as He looks upon the heart of the individual. He isn't interested in a pledge of allegiance, He is interested in loyalty from the heart. One of the functions of biblical discipleship is to flush that type of person out into the open and make him face the real truth.

E. The essentials of “revival” or fighting with the power of the Holy Ghost

In order to be a truly effective soldier for the Lord, you must be completely committed to Him. This is a very rare state and only the best soldiers live in it. Most Christians try to live just a little bit “in the flesh” and a lot “in the spirit.” It never makes them a more effective warrior. Every little area of your life that you withhold from God is a chink in your armor. Only you can decide what kind of soldier you want to be. Every Christian has the potential to be the greatest soldier that ever lived. God doesn’t care how insignificant or untalented you may be. The truth is that little is much when God is in it. What kind of soldier will you be? You already have all the power you need.

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

“. . . Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6).

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

IV. And When the Battle's Over

One day, soon we believe, our Lord will come back and establish His throne on the Earth. When that happens, all our battles and trials will be over. But they will NOT be forgotten. Our God is a just God and He will reward each of us according to our works. These rewards will last for eternity. Did you ever wonder what those rewards might be?

I wonder . . . what would it feel like to have several crowns to cast at my Lord's feet like the 24 elders in Revelation 4.

I wonder . . . how dear will I be to the heart of my Lord. How precious will be His memories of how I stood for Him through His power when the going got tough.

I wonder . . . how many people will come up to me now and then as eternity rolls by and say: "Thank you. Thank you for what you did to bring the gospel to me. Thank you for showing me the truth."

I wonder . . .

Reactions

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- 1. Do you feel that this series of lessons has made a significant difference in your growth in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord”? Please let us know in the space below if you feel like something was missing in this series or what we can do to improve it.**

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