

Strength for the Fight

Dub McClish

Just as God's people in the Old Testament had their physical armies to wage war against the enemies of God, so His New Testament people are figuratively depicted as soldiers engaged in the never-ending battle against iniquity and error. Paul used this figure more than any other New Testament writer, but Peter and James also used it to some extent.

In order to press the fight against evil, our Commander-in-chief (1 Tim. 6:14-16) has provided a variety of adequate equipment. We have both "weapons" (2 Cor. 10:4) and "armor" (Rom. 13:12; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 6:11, 13) with which we are to arm ourselves (1 Pet. 4:1). Only by taking advantage of the "whole armor of God" can we victoriously stand for Christ (Eph. 6:11, 13).

As we "fight the good fight of the faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) we need to be strong lest we be overcome. The Lord has provided for that need. Physical strength is needed, but it is insufficient by itself. We must have spiritual health and strength to prevail against the devil: "Exercise thyself unto godliness: for bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come" (2 Tim. 4:4-7).

The soldier of Christ who falls on the battlefield cannot plead that no spiritual strength was made available. Paul commanded, "Be strong in the Lord" (Eph. 6:10). This is a passive verb form, meaning, "be strengthened," or, as the ASV footnote reads, "Be made powerful." The passive form implies submission to the avenues of strength available to us.

The prime curse of the rank-and-file soldier of Christ is a spirit of selfishness, resulting in rebellion and insubordination toward the Word of Christ. This is often focused on those who faithfully preach the Truth. Many hearers are not so wise and spiritually mature as those who enlisted in the Heavenly ranks in old Thessalonica. When they heard the Gospel, they "accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in Truth, the word of God" (1 The. 2:13). Tragically, many who claim to be soldiers of Christ accept the Word of God as if it were the words of men, despising its authority and sometimes seeking to silence its proclaimer. This spirit is also registered toward godly elders and their Scriptural authority over our souls (Heb. 13:17). All such rebellion is ultimately aimed at Christ Himself, who has commanded preachers to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2) and elders to oversee the flock (Acts 20:28).

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