

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Onward Christian Soldiers

(Jerry Fite)

The title will remind many of a familiar hymn. But when was the last time you sang it in a worship service? Going off to war has been the experience of Americans for a decade now. So, why has not this song been selected more, easily tying the secular experience with the Scriptural Truth of spiritual warfare?

One reason could be that we grow tired of war. Constant battle wears us down. We turn to emphasizing peace, leading us to find ways to avoid conflict. The danger in any prolonged war is the sacrifice of principle. Peace at any price becomes tempting to a society tired of continual fighting. Let us find a way out. While looking, can we sing of peace instead of “Onward Christian Soldiers”?

The New Testament is filled with imagery reminding us of the spiritual warfare in which all Christians are engaged. We do not “*war according to the flesh*”, but we are to be focused on “*casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bring-*

ing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). The Christian’s privileged duty is “*Fight the good fight of the faith*,” a specific that sums up the life of the faithful (1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Tim. 4:6-8). Keeping the faith demands we “*contend for the faith*” (Jude 3). As a “*good soldier of Christ Jesus*” we “*suffer hardship*”, and stay focused on how we can “*please*” our Lord instead of being “*entangled in the affairs of this life*” (2 Timothy 2:3-4).

As soldiers of Christ, we must not grow tired of fighting the good fight. The battle with the flesh does not end. “*Fleshly lusts*” which “*war against the soul*” began in the garden of Eden, and continues today. We must be alert and determined to “*abstain*” from such lusts (Genesis 3:1-6, 2 Peter. 2:11).

We must arm ourselves with the word of God which equips against “*the wiles of the devil*”. We are no match to our enemy without “*the armor of God*” (Ephesians 6:10-11). Holding the “*shield of faith*”, and

wielding the “*sword of the spirit*” serves us well as we “*withstand*” the spiritual foe (Ephesians 6:13-17).

As a good soldier of Christ, we must never grow complacent, for doctrinal error does not cease from seeking inroads. The reason for alerting all to contend for the faith is to counteract the error that crept in privily during Jude’s day. Such call to arms took precedence over his desire to speak of the salvation shared by all in Christ (Jude 3-4).

The banner we hold up is the one rallying all to truth. David speaks of what God has given His army: “*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth*” (Psalm 60:4). While the Psalm’s title relates to Joab returning from the Valley of Salt after smiting 12,000 Edomites, it speaks of setbacks and moments when God’s people are staggered. It is about standing for truth, not winning or losing specific battles. So it is with the good fight of faith. May truth prevail! Onward Christian Soldier!