

Text: 2 Tim. 2:3-4

Title: "A good soldier of Jesus Christ"

Time: 11/6/2022 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: "Veterans Day, formerly known as Armistice Day, was originally set as a U.S. legal holiday to honor the end of World War I, which officially took place on November 11, 1918. In legislature that was passed in 1938, November 11 was 'dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be hereafter celebrated and known as *Armistice Day*.'

[*Armistice* means *the laying down of arms*.] As such, this new legal holiday honored World War I veterans.

"In 1954, after having been through both World War II and the Korean War, the 83rd U.S. Congress -- at the urging of the veterans' service organizations -- amended the Act of 1938 by striking out the word *Armistice* and inserting the word *Veterans*. With the approval of this legislation on June 1, 1954, Nov. 11 became a day to honor American veterans of all wars" [[http:// www.military.com/veteransday/History.htm](http://www.military.com/veteransday/History.htm)].

The duty of soldiers is honorable work. The freedoms we enjoy this morning as we gather to worship have not come to us free of charge. They have come only through the sacrifice, hard work, and dedication of wonderful Americans who have been willing to stand in harm's way to earn and protect these freedoms.

*Soldier* was a complement the apostle Paul used sparingly. He speaks of Epaphroditus as his brother, fellow-worker, and fellow-soldier (Phil 2:25), and he uses the same term for Archippus in the book of Philemon (v. 1). When he

called these men *soldiers*, Paul honored them with one of the highest complements he could give.

Soldiers provide an important example for the lives of Christians, and no passage of Scripture makes this plainer than 2 Tim. 2:3-4, where Paul exhorts each of us to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. This morning I want us to see two things about what it means to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ from this passage.

I. A good soldier of Jesus Christ will endure the hardship of battle (v. 3).

Illustration: 9/11 changed many things in our country, and one of those changes includes the understanding that military volunteers have when they join the armed services. These young men and women understand the likelihood of the need to suffer hardship on the battlefield in a way many did not prior to 9/11.

One of the things I remember about the Persian Gulf War was that some of the members of the all-volunteer military, especially many of the reserve recruits, never had seriously considered the prospect that they may experience the battlefield. Many of those who joined the military in those days did so to get money for school, learn a career skill, and see the world. Following one of the popular recruitment slogans of the time, many joined to "Be all [they] can be!" Since 9/11 we have been a nation at war. Those who join today cannot escape the truth that a call to military service is a call to the battlefield.

Application: If we are going to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we must be ready and willing to do battle, to endure hardship for the sake of the gospel.

Paul was a soldier who was busy fighting the battles of the Lord rather than pursuing his selfish ambitions and whims. He was writing this letter to his spiritual son Timothy from a cold damp prison, awaiting execution for the crime of being a Christian, and in that condition, he tells Timothy that a good soldier suffers hardship so that the Word of God is not bound (v. 9).

As American Christians we are especially tempted to be surprised when it comes time to suffer hardship for the cause of the Word of God. We feel like the hardships of ministry are more than we signed up for and less than we deserve. We feel that local church hardship is not what we want out of our relationship with the Lord. Many Christians have enlisted in Christianity for any number of reasons, but good soldiers are those who enlist anticipating the need to serve on the battlefield.

What are some of the hardships of the battlefield?

(1) Family sacrifice. We often hear in Christian circles about how important it is to put family first. Yet what soldier who served in Iraq, Afghanistan, or anywhere else in the world would have been able to do their job if they lived by this principle? (Luke 14:25-26). There are family sacrifices that must be made in the work of the Lord.

(2) Personal sacrifice (Luke 14:27). Where did people go after picking up a cross? Calvary. Why? To die. Soldiers make personal sacrifices to do their duty. Paul said, "I die daily" (1 Cor. 15:31). We must die to self to serve the Lord.

(3) Financial sacrifice. One thing that Christian soldiering certainly has in common with secular military service is the fact that there is not a lot of money in it. We cannot be

living for money and be good soldiers of Jesus Christ (Luke 14:28-33). Counting the cost of Christian service includes settling ahead of time that we are not living for the things of this world.

(4) Security sacrifice. Of all the epistles that the Apostle Paul wrote, no less than five were written while he was in prison. Paul would not have understood the religious freedom you and I take for granted as a normal part of life. He spent years in prison. Entrance into the kingdom of heaven is ordinarily through prison doors. Such is the case for brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world today. Satan hates that we are free, but he loves that we are unaware what an exceptional privilege it is that we are. I hope we take seriously our responsibility to vote for freedom this coming Tuesday.

(5) Friendship sacrifice. Often Paul's battlefield experience was a lonely one (2 Tim. 4:16-18). The word he uses in verse 7 translated *endure hardness* has a prefix on it that means *together*. Paul asks Timothy to join him in enduring hardness. Some had not been willing to do so (2 Tim. 4:9-11). But even in the lonely times, Jesus was always with Paul (v. 17).

Illustration: Stories of heroism on the battlefield are stories of soldiers giving their lives for other soldiers. Soldiers endure hardship together.

A convoy carrying building supplies was rumbling north from Balad, Iraq, on the morning of Oct. 26, 2005, when it entered an ambush nearly two miles long. Roadside bombs exploded. Rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons opened up. In the command vehicle, Army Reserve Sgt. James "Ski" Witkowski, 25, opened fire with his .50-caliber machine gun in the turret.

The convoy commander, Staff Sgt. Mike Mulcahy, 31, heard Witkowski stop firing. In a rear seat, Army Reserve Spc. Keith Lamott, 27, of Tucson, heard Witkowski grunt. Then there was an explosion. They now believe that a grenade landed just above the rim of the turret and Witkowski blocked it with his body to minimize the blast or keep it from falling inside the Humvee. He was killed instantly. Shrapnel rained down on Mulcahy, Lamott and the driver, Staff Sgt. Jeffery Gantt, 37, of Fredericksburg, Va., another National Guardsman. The soldiers were about a month from coming home. [<https://thefallen.militarytimes.com/army-sgt-james-witkowski/1220880>]

Are we ready to endure hardship together as good soldiers of Jesus Christ? Is that what we have signed up for? It may or may not be, but one thing is certain: New Testament Christianity is lived as a soldier on a battlefield. To live that life, we must be willing to make hard sacrifices together.

II. The good soldier of Jesus Christ will avoid entanglements (v. 4).

Illustration: When I was a boy growing up, our family had some fine dogs, and we also had Shannon. Shannon was a mut of a dog that was the size of a terrier, but she also had hair which grew as long as a sheepdog; and she must have had some poodle in her because she never shed.

Shannon's hair was always a mess. She would develop huge mats with embedded burrs in her coat that were impossible to get out. Giving Shannon a bath was an impossible task which took hours and was never fully successful. Ultimately, because her hair was so entangled, we would finally have to take her to the dog groomer and have it all cut off.

Application: The Greeks would have used this word *entangled* in verse 4 to describe those burrs caught in Shannon's black hair. The word is used in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a favorite devotional book of the early church, to describe a sheep which had gotten thorns caught in its wool.

A good soldier of Jesus Christ will avoid getting entangled in the affairs of this life. The word translated *affairs of this life* means simply daily undertakings, business affairs. It is not sin that Paul is concerned about here, but rather being too busy to serve the Lord.

No private on the battlefield tells his sergeant, "You know what serge, I've had it with this battle for a while, and I am going to go fishing for a month and take a little break." There is nothing wrong with fishing, but in the context of a battle that needs to be fought, going fishing for a month is absolutely disastrous. No sergeant would allow it.

We need to be disciplined soldiers of Jesus Christ, focused on duty rather than pleasure. And why do our duty unentangled? The answer is very simple - to please the One who has called us to be a soldier, the Lord Jesus Christ who fought so valiantly for us.

Illustration: At times we read about soldiers who have been displeasing to their commanders. You may remember the news reports about Jesse MacBeth:

"A man who tried to position himself as a leader of the anti-war movement by claiming to have participated in war crimes while serving in Iraq is facing federal charges of falsifying his record. Jesse Adam Macbeth, 23, formerly of Phoenix, garnered attention on blogs and in some alternative media after he began claiming in 2005 to have been

awarded a Purple Heart for his service, which he said included slaughtering innocents in a Fallujah mosque.

“His story was contradicted by his discharge form, showing that he was kicked out of the Army after six weeks at Fort Benning, Ga., in 2003 because of his ‘entry level performance and conduct.’ A complaint unsealed . . . in U.S. District Court in Seattle charged him with one count of using or possessing a forged or altered military discharge certificate, and one count of making false statements in seeking benefits from the Veterans Administration. . . . Macbeth admitted falsifying the documents because he was homeless and wanted to ‘sucker’ anything he could out of the government.” [[http://www.foxnews.com/printer\\_friendly\\_story/0,3566,274097,00.html](http://www.foxnews.com/printer_friendly_story/0,3566,274097,00.html)]

That is the record of a soldier who no longer wanted to please his commander. Do you and I want to please our commander or ourselves? Do we falsely claim to be engaged in the work of the gospel, when really we are focused on our own selfish ambitions? Good soldiers of Jesus Christ refuse the entanglements of selfishness to please their Commander, just like He did for them.

Conclusion: If you see that it is time to enlist as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, understand that Paul is asking for something we cannot do on our own. We can pray for that power, however, a prayer like West Point’s Cadet prayer:

“O God, our Father, Thou Searcher of human hearts, help us to draw near to Thee in sincerity and truth. May our religion be filled with gladness and may our worship of Thee be natural. Strengthen and increase our admiration for honest dealing and clean thinking and suffer not our hatred of hypocrisy and pretense ever to diminish.

“Encourage us in our endeavor to live above the common level of life. Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be content with a half-truth when the whole can be won. Endow us with courage that is born of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy, that scorns to compromise with vice and injustice and knows no fear when truth and right are in jeopardy. Guard us against flippancy and irreverence in the sacred things of life.

“Grant us new ties of friendship and new opportunities of service. Kindle our hearts in fellowship with those of a cheerful countenance and soften our hearts with sympathy for those who sorrow and suffer. Help us to maintain the honor of the Corps [here insert *the Christ*] untarnished and unsullied and to show forth in our lives the ideals of West Point [here insert *Christ’s kingdom*] in doing our duty to Thee and to our Country.

“All of which we ask in the name of the Great Friend and Master of all. Amen.”

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,