

Enduring As A Good Soldier

Drawing on the Soldier Metaphor

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I would like to thank Richard because he gave me the opening (at least the opening sentence or two) for my sermon this afternoon. This morning we heard that the changes, which will end in our glorification have already begun ["When Our Change Comes"]. And this afternoon (Richard quoted earlier from Job 14 about our hard service), we are going to hear about that aspect: our hard service that we have to go through before glorification takes place.

Now during the past several months as I have been traveling from Church of the Great God congregations, I have given a Bible study that I titled, "Salvation Words." Now each term describes an important aspect of a successful spiritual life. Each one of these represents something so important to the process that if it left out—salvation will not occur. There are nine of them. The terms are: election, calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification.

Now I believe that most of you who are listening to me have completed six of those steps. You have completed election, calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, and adoption. If one of those is missing, conversion will not take place. We will not be in the Kingdom of God. Two are very definitely in-process: sanctification and perseverance. Then there is a third one—glorification—that one will come in the future if God in His grace approves of our measure of love, loyalty, and growth.

Now I believe the foundation for success is very solidly laid, and what remains is further growth as we persevere through the pressures of the times that we find ourselves living in. Sanctification to God and to His way, and persevering right on through the difficulties of the times, are to be our focus.

Now I want you to turn to Jeremiah 30:4-7, scriptures with which we are quite familiar. This provides a very good foundation for this message.

Jeremiah 30:4-7 Now these are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah. "For thus says the Lord: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.'"

We are living in a time that, by God's own testimony, is unique in the history of mankind. Look at that illustration. What could be more unique than a man giving birth to a baby? We know that it is not really occurring. But the illustration is very apt for how unique this period of time—I am sure, brethren—we are right on the edge of at this time.

Jesus claims that the times are like the days of Noah. And this statement is not a contradiction. It is not really true, let us say, that the days of Noah were as unique as this particular time. This is because in one sense some of life's activities continue right on through, somewhat normally.

Now there are reasons for why this period of time is so stressful, and I believe that a major factor making this time unique is that electronics have provided virtually instantaneous communication of what is happening over the ENTIRE globe! Not just the local community, not just the state, not even one nation...but electronics are hooked into every nation. Something can happen in India, China, or Japan and... Boy! It is in the United States in a matter of maybe just minutes. And not only just here, but everywhere else in the world that is hooked in to the internet.

To add salt to this wound, never in the history of mankind have there been so many weapons available to terrorize people and threaten them with fear. And fear itself has become a weapon of terror. It is stressful to be thinking about this...very, very frequently. Almost wherever we go and at any time, if you happen to be in a big community, like a major city today, you always have to think, "What am I going to do if someone blows himself to bits right around me somewhere?"

Now Daniel's prophecy of knowledge being increased is virtually overwhelming us—that increase in knowledge—with very real, stressful psychological pressures. And it is not just the news, the political, economic and military events, it is the news that comes from every aspect of life like advertising, entertainment, sports, weather, one's job, and discouraging family relationships. It is sort of, "what you did not know will not hurt you." But, the thing is, you do know. There is no dodging it anymore, because communication is almost instantaneous.

God is warning us, in this prophecy, that there is no complete escaping from it. He has willed that it be part of our preparation for His kingdom, and that means to me, therefore, that there are some good aspects to all this pressure. In Matthew 24:13, Jesus admonishes us that we must endure to the end.

I believe that we would be better served if they had translated that as "perseveres." The Greek term Matthew used is *hupomone*. This Greek term has a more active sense to it than the English term "endure." Endure, in English, is more passive than persevere is. Endure indicates bearing up under. Persevere indicates actively persisting through.

To me, enduring conduct is a bottom line acceptable response. Persevere suggests growth and progress in spite of the difficulty. I do not think that Jesus intends that we just passively go through this. We are to take advantage of all that we can that God leads us to be responsible for responding to.

Now I want you to go with me to Ephesians 6:18. We are just be there, it is a very short verse, but it contains a very interesting principle—command, actually—for you and me today.

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

I looked this word "perseverance" up in a couple of other translations, and they translated it as "persistence." That is what perseverance suggests. Yes, it is difficult going through this, and it may be a difficult time to bear, but we are to be persistent—keeping at it. The word suggests stick-to-itiveness. And if you are sticking to something, keeping it up, you are not standing still. You are involved in accomplishing something.

Now it is very interesting that Paul suggests that we do this—suggests? commands!—because it appears right after we are told what we are at war with. In verse 13, it says to "take up the whole armor of God..." "Stand therefore [in verse 14], having girded your waist with truth, having put on

the breastplate of righteousness, having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace." And, then "putting on the shield of faith" and the "helmet of salvation." All of these are instruments that we are to use in the battle we are involved in, and then, "praying always"—persistently.

It is almost as if he is saying that without the prayer, taking all of this paraphernalia is not going to help, because you are praying to the One who can help us to use the materials properly.

Some of the verses we will read today—actually, I think there is about 10 verses in the sermon—I am going to read from the Phillips translation. I am doing it because Phillips just translates these things with such energy. Now listen to this:

II Thessalonians 2:15-17 (Phillips) So stand firm, and hold on! Be loyal to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or in our writings. May the Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father (who has loved us and given us unending encouragement and unfailing hope, by His grace) inspire you with courage and confidence in every good thing you say or do.

Now think of that in terms of the times we are living in, when all this pressure is going to want to force us into a defensive posture all the time in our minds. That does not sound like he is saying, "Hey, be on the defensive." Pretty much, he is saying, "Let us be on the offensive in the right areas." Why would God's apostle even have to say such things?

There is no indication in the background of this letter to indicate that they were going through heavy persecution, but time-wise, heavy persecution may not have been all that far off either. When this epistle was written, the church was already undergoing a barrage of mental confusion coming from Satan.

Before invading a city, an army very frequently lays down an artillery barrage to soften it up before entering it. Satan does the same thing, spiritually.

We are going to turn to Philippians 1:27-30. It is a little bit longer quote. It is, again, from the Phillips translation.

Philippians 1:27-30 (Phillips) But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ. So that whether I do come and see you, or merely hear about you from a distance, I may know that you are standing fast in a united spirit, battling with a single mind for the faith of the gospel and not caring two straws for your enemies. The very fact that they are your enemies is plain proof that they are lost to God, while the fact that you have such men as enemies is plain proof that you yourselves are being saved by God. [See what we are going through is good. It is proof we are being saved.] You are given, in this battle, the privilege of not merely believing in Christ but also suffering for his sake. It is now your turn to take part in the battle you once saw me engaged in, and which, in point of fact, I am still fighting.

Notice the terms indicating competitiveness in that paragraph: stand fast, adversaries, suffer, conflict. That has all of the sounds of war. The apostle, here, draws upon metaphors in the book of Philippians from citizenship, warfare, and athletics. All three apply to everyday life, because we are never free of our responsibility to the gospel. The gospel has enemies, enemies that hate us. We have duties. We are in a war, and we are to strive as if we are in athletics to win what we are involved in.

Let us turn to another place. This is in II Corinthians 10:1-6. This kind of thing is in almost every book Paul wrote, every epistle.

II Corinthians 10:1-6 (Phillips) Now I am going to appeal to you personally, by the gentleness and sympathy of Christ himself. Yes, I, Paul, the one who is "humble enough in our presence but outspoken when away from us", [that is what they were saying] and begging you to make it unnecessary for me to be outspoken and stern in your presence. For I am afraid otherwise that I shall have to do some plain speaking to those of you who will persist in reckoning that our activities are on the purely human level. The truth is that, although of course we lead normal human lives, the battle we are fighting is on a spiritual level. The very weapons we use are not those of human warfare but powerful in God's warfare for the destruction of the enemy's strongholds. Our battle is to bring down every deceptive fantasy and every imposing defense that men erect against the true knowledge of God. We even fight to capture every thought until it acknowledges the authority of Christ. Once we are sure of your obedience, we shall not shrink from dealing with those who refuse to obey.

We are involved in a war. That does not mean that our warfare is always of the same intensity. You will recall that during the Days of Unleavened Bread the ministry very frequently expounds upon what we are as we travel through this way toward the kingdom of God. We are pilgrims facing a variety of experiences as we travel along the way, and what we are to become—kings and priests, as glorified sons of God—determines to a great extent what we will be involved in along the way.

Exodus 13:17-18 Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go [This is right after the exodus from Goshen and so forth that occurred], that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although this way was near; for God said, "Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.

God feared because of Israel's weaknesses. You might recall that two years later, when they had the opportunity to go into the Promised Land, they refused to go in because they were afraid of warfare with the people of the land. That fear of war was still with them.

You also might recall that as they went through the wilderness, there were occasional times when somebody would attack them. The one that comes to mind right now is the Amalekites, who attacked their rear flanks, where all of the weak people were. Israel had a hard time overcoming them. Remember Joshua and Caleb had to hold Moses' arms up, because every time the arms came down Israel started to lose. They were having a hard time fighting these people who did this dastardly deed.

But, as time went on and we get toward the end of the trek through the wilderness, they did have occasion to fight the Moabites, the Midianites, and others of the land. And almost every one of these attacks came after Israel was better prepared to fight a war. They were beginning to believe God and His servant Moses. Every time these people came up against them, just as they were going into the land, they beat the tar out of that other army.

Is there a parallel for us, brethren? Is our warfare going to intensify as we continue into the time of the end? I think that is there for us to learn. God has mercifully treated us very kindly along the way until now. But now that warfare against the people of the land that we are fighting is intensifying.

Those attackers that Israel faced in war have symbolic application as well as literal. We are to learn from them so that we will be better prepared for what we are going to go through and might thus cope, as well, as part of our training.

We are going to go back to the book of Ephesians once again. We were in Ephesians just a little while ago. We were on verses following what I am going to read right now. Paul writes:

Ephesians 6:10-12 (Phillips) In conclusion be strong—not in yourselves, but in the Lord, in the power of His boundless resource. Put on God's complete armor so that you can successfully resist all of the devil's methods of attack. For our fight is not against any physical enemy: it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls the dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil. Therefore you must wear the whole armor of God that you may be able to resist evil in its day of power, and that even when have fought to a standstill you may still stand your ground.

Well, there it is, brethren. We are involved in a war. It is a spiritual war against enemies far greater in number, intelligence, subtlety, cunning, and power than Israel had to war against. In addition, they are invisible.

We occasionally sing, "Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war." Do we think of ourselves as soldiers actively involved in a war? If we do not, it is time we begin to think of ourselves in that category, because God is pointing out to you and me that it is a reality.

We *are* in a war against an enemy that is deeply entrenched, against an enemy that has held its ground here in the world for who knows how many millennia of time. They have been here all the while mankind has been here, and how many millennia before that? They think this place is theirs! They are going defend it with everything that is within them. Brethren, they do have a right to it, because God gave it to them first. It was their first estate.

Now God, who is owner of all, is going to kick them out and give it to His Son and us. It is our inheritance that we are fighting for. Is it worth fighting for? Is it worth taking it from an enemy that is really responsible for all the destruction that is going on, on earth, through the motivation of human beings who are not aware of them even being around; or, even if they are aware, they do not really believe that they are being manipulated. But, they are.

Paul says that we are to stand our ground. Stand is a military term for holding on to a position; and before one can launch an attack, one must first hold on to a position or establish a beachhead. In that series of verses there was a three-fold use of the word "against." It stresses the determined hostility that the Christian soldier confronts.

In addition to that, two different times he used the word "resist," meaning "hold the ground you already have. Do not give in." Now in military strategy, one must never underestimate the strength of the enemy. Our struggle is not merely against human foes, but it is a war to the death against supernatural forces.

In that series of verses, the term "powers," as it appears in the King James Version, denotes one who aspires to wield control—this is what we are fighting for—to be somebody who wants to hang onto what they have. And this term was used by ancient writers to designate the savior god of the pagan

religions. Guess who that was? That is the one who is commanding general of the forces arrayed to us: the pagan god, Satan by name.

Our warfare has many of the trappings of literal war, but so often we are unaware that it is even going on and are therefore unprepared to wage it successfully. There are qualities that we need in order to fight successfully. One of these is the knowledge that I am refreshing to your mind: God says that we really are at war. There are going to be times that we must face privation, hardship, pain, sorrow, hunger and thirst, fear and insecurity. We will face victory and defeat. There will be times of obedience, discipline, courage, sacrifice, and sometimes death.

Without a doubt, the battle lines have already formed. They are becoming more visible almost day by day, as we see our liberties eroding even in this freest of all nations. The enemy is moving. I believe that it is very clear that times of privation are already upon many, and it will spread out to engulf more.

Just a few moments ago, I mentioned the word "mindset." And I want us to see one major aspect of this warfare metaphor that Paul used several times. I want to especially focus on some of the qualities it takes to successfully fight this war. I want us to be able to clearly identify these qualities and to see how God is working to equip us with them.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed so that we can be alert, diligent, and persevering even though suffering as a good soldier. I am going to be providing you with instruction from people very familiar with war and what is required of soldiers to fight and achieve victory.

II Timothy 2:1-4 (Phillips) So, my son, be strong in the grace that Christ Jesus gives. Everything that you have heard me preach in public you should in turn entrust to reliable men, who will be able to pass it on to others. Put up with your share of hardship as a loyal soldier in Christ's army. Remember that no soldier on active service gets himself entangled in business, or he will not please his commanding officer.

So Timothy was instructed to commit Paul's teaching to trustworthy or reliable men, and at the same time encouraged to be willing to endure hardship. To do these things requires this mindset: single-mindedness. Mark it down! This is what is required of a soldier: single-mindedness.

A soldier has one major responsibility in warfare, and Paul tells what it is: to please the government that has inducted him into its service. You have been inducted by Jesus Christ into the government of God. And we have to be single minded in pleasing the government that has done this. We will not endure if we are deeply entangled in civilian pursuits or distracted by other concerns. The history of the Israelitish people is not very bright in this regard.

Turn with me to Deuteronomy 32, where we will see a judgment.

Deuteronomy 32:19-20 And when the Lord saw it, He spurned them, [Israel] because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters. And He said [notice God's response]: 'I will hide my face from them and I will see what their end will be. For they are a perverse generation, children in whom there is no faith.'

God, in effect, is saying there, I am going to abandon them; if that is the way they are going to be, they cannot expect My help. Israel's trek through the wilderness was accompanied by a continuous

chorus of grumbling and murmuring all the way from Egypt to Canaan. Brethren, this was by a slave people accustomed to privation. They had experienced it all their lives. So in one sense, just going out into the wilderness was no big deal in terms of privation. It just continued right on. But, even to a people accustomed to privation, remaining faithful to God was difficult.

Virtually everything—let us compare things here—in our era is designed to make life easier. Pharaoh did not make things easier for the Israelites. But in our culture, that is what we do—more leisure, more escape, more and more of things; less work, less responsibility, less commitment to duty. It seemingly—I mean this prosperity—produces more people of welfare mentality looking for somebody else to do their responsibilities for them. People looking for a free ride, as though such a thing really existed...

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, made this statement in a sermon. He said that he believed that wealth has destroyed the godliness of more people than any other material thing. Now compared to others, the average American lives in the lap of luxury. Now this is not evil in itself. But, it does not tend to build hardiness, discipline, and perseverance as history adequately shows. Instead, people grow soft.

Now notice God's testimony regarding Israel in verse 15, same chapter.

Deuteronomy 32:15 But Jeshurun [Jeshurun is a code name for Israel. But, Israel] grew fat and kicked [fat is a symbol of prosperity, because when people are prospered they tend to put on weight]; you grew fat, you grew thick, you are obese! Then he forsook God who made him and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

That is quite a testimony of our ancestors. As they became more prosperous, they turned away from God because it produced, very subtly, a second master for them to submit to. God shows that He made Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob grow quite wealthy. In fact, it says of Abraham that he was very wealthy. But, they did not lack the character to handle the affluence. It did not destroy them. Wealth demands that we manage it and then oversee the care of it, and the care for what it purchases. It creates time consuming distractions and subtly produces idolatry.

I want you to reflect on the United States. Those of you who are older should be able to relate to what I am going to say here a little bit better than our younger people, but maybe they know a little bit about American history.

There was a time in our history when the public attitude was different. The Americans were a people who were on the move, because there was work to be done. A vast and powerful land begged to be settled, and industries needed to be built. Those people were challenged by hostile weather, high mountains, hot deserts, viscous animals, and Indians who resisted their advance. They envisioned, though, great projects and persevered through great personal privations to accomplishment. This attitude seems to have generally lasted through World War I and maybe a little longer.

Even in World War I, the Americans were characterized as the "singing doughboys" with George M. Cohan writing the patriotic songs. Then came the Roaring '20s, the Depression, and World War II. But, somewhere along the way we seem to have lost something, because by World War II, the American symbol seems to have shifted to the cartoonish, complaining, scornful and cynical Willy and Joe, the typical G.I.s from the pen of Bill Mauldin.

World War II, indeed, was an experience of great pain, of privation, terror and loss. And when it was over, that is what we remembered. Since then our goal seems to be to make life easier—internationally, nationally, and personally. We have all been affected to some degree by this attitude of securing ease. Perhaps no group of Americans have done this more fervently than the Baby Boomers.

It was Martin Luther who said, "A full stomach does not promote piety, for it stands secure and neglects God." Affluence is not inherently evil, but it has a tremendous potential for distraction and for making us resistant to sacrifice to faithfully persevere with patience, vision, and understanding, without complaining, in order to reach a great goal. These are things we must have. That vision that was talked about today... We need it.

Now I am going to remind you of some things of what a soldier is called for. In many of these cases, I am going to quote from General Douglas MacArthur's autobiography, *Reminiscences of Douglas MacArthur*. This first one is taken from page 424:

The soldier, above all men, is required to practice the greatest act of religious training: sacrifice [do you hear what he said?]. In battle and in the face of danger and death, he discloses those divine attributes which his Maker gave when He created man in His own image. No physical courage and no brute instinct can take the place of divine help which alone can sustain him. However horrible the incidents of war may be, the soldier who is called upon to offer and give his life for his country is the noblest development of mankind.

Are we willing to sacrifice our life daily, as Paul said? He said, "I die daily." Are we willing to do that for God's Kingdom?

In another place, MacArthur says, "A soldier is called sometimes to fight, sometimes to die, but always to suffer."

Suffering is the normal business of the soldier. But the Captain of our salvation has gone on before us. It records of Him, in the book of Hebrews, that He learned from the things that He suffered. Should we not be willing to follow in His footsteps and learn as He learned, as He was suffering?

American people, by and large, do not have this concept any longer because our minds have not captured the vision of a great goal that needs to be accomplished; and thus as a nation, we are ill prepared for what is coming. This is where we, too, stand because we, brethren, have been conditioned by the same culture.

There is another interesting quote. This is from *The United States Fighting Man's Manual*. They probably changed it by the time that the latest printing has been made available, but I took this from the introduction, page 2:

An indomitable will to resist is not acquired overnight [Remember Paul's talk about standing your ground, about resisting], nor can it be supplied by military training alone, for it rests on the character traits instilled in our homes, our schools, and our churches—traits such as self-confidence, self-reliance, self-discipline, self-respect, moral responsibility, and faith in God and country.

The attack that has been mounted against our culture here in the United States has been going on with strength for at least 100 years. What did he first attack? He attacked our homes, our schools, and our churches; the places of greatest and most important instruction, in terms of character. These are exactly the areas where our culture has collapsed. The result is the general character of our people is degenerating.

Now let us not lose sight of what I said. We have come out of the same culture and are instructed by the same people, virtually.

Paul again says the following to Timothy chapter 3. It was just in chapter 4 that he said we have to be a good soldier. We cannot allow ourselves to get entangled in the business of this world. Now the metaphor is going to shift a little bit. But this is important instruction.

II Timothy 3:1-5 (Phillips) But, you must realize that in the last days times will be full of danger [Amen to that.]. Men will become utterly self-centered, greedy for money, full of big words. They will be proud and contemptuous, without any regard for what their parents have taught them. They will be utterly lacking in gratitude, purity, and normal human affections. They will be men of unscrupulous speech and have no control of themselves. They will be passionate and unprincipled, treacherous, self-willed, and conceited, loving all the time what gives them pleasure instead of loving God. They will maintain a facade of "religion," but their conduct will deny its validity. You must keep clear of people like this.

So, Paul said you have to be willing to sacrifice yourself to the government that inducted you, because you cannot get yourself entangled in the business of the world. Now he is saying, "Do not even bother with those people. Get away from them, when you find that that is the kind of character that they have. Do not associate with them." This, brethren, describes what we have grown up in.

Sometimes, brethren, coming into the church, and into contact with the disciplines and the standards of Christianity, comes as quite a shock to us. We are just not prepared for its demanding hardships. So Paul says—he warns, he commands—to be aware of the times we live in and get away from those people. Why? Because of another principle he gave in another book. He says, "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

Basically he says, "You are not going to pull those people up to you. They are going to tear you down to them." There is a reason for that. They have absolutely no reason to come, spiritually, to where you are. They cannot do it. It takes the spirit of God. It takes God electing them and calling them to come to where you are. They cannot do it. It is an impossible task. So do not expect it.

Again, from MacArthur's, *Reminiscences of Douglas MacArthur*, page 335:

The story of the infantry soldier is an old and honorable one. He carries his home with him and often his grave. Somehow he has to bring along the whole paraphernalia of fighting as well as domesticated living—the grocery store, the ration dump, the hospital, the medical corps, the garage, the motor pool, the telephone, and the signal service. He is vulnerable day and night. Death has its finger on him 24 hours—in battle, going forward to it, or retreating from it. It's a wonder that the morale of these uniform gypsies never falters.

Now I would not say, "Never." MacArthur had far more experience than I ever had, by far. But our soldiers became discouraged and downtrodden as well. But he is trying to build in people's minds what a sacrifice they have made for us, because a soldier's lot is not always a happy one. And you know that your lot, even under Jesus Christ, is not always happy. A soldier undergoes rigorous training and schooling with hardships designed right into the training. It is done in order to produce a disciplined, obedient soldier.

Now why, brethren, is such a thing necessary?

I am going to quote from a different source this time. This time it is from a biography of Winston Churchill, titled, *From the Diaries of Lord Moran*, page 119. It begins:

Marshall told me [This is Lord Moran speaking. He is speaking of General George Marshall, American General in the Second World War.] that the problem of this war [listen to this] was the disciplining of the citizen soldier. Anyway, that has been his task, and it has not been easy—for the American youth is self-confident. He is quite certain that he knows a better way of doing things than those who are ordering him about. Marshall had, at the beginning, to plan a three month basic training, the sole purpose of which was to get the recruit see that he must do what he is told.

Oh, that goes against the grain of an American. We always think we know better. It is right in us. Do you know how I know that? Because God says, "This has been the problem from the very beginning." Proverbs 14:12 and Proverbs 16:25 both say, "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Think of this in terms of warfare. Adam and Eve thought they knew best when Helel gave them a "better" way—and they died. Right from the beginning God is beginning to preach to you and me, "Do what I say. And you will live."

We cannot say we have not been warned. It is everywhere we look. God later said, "You are the most obstinate, hard-headed, stubborn people I have ever seen in My life." Oh boy! So, we come by it naturally. The problem is, brethren, from the time we are little tots, it is being engrained into us, day by day.

I hope, parents, you understand that when you say, "No!" to your child that you make sure he knows you mean "NO!" by following through. You will save that kid a multitude of trouble. Most of the time, we parents are afraid of our children. Get your courage up, parents, to teach them the way that they should go. You do not have to be cruel and harsh. You just have to do it.

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child: "Mean Old Momma." Maybe you do not remember Paul Harvey. But, every Mother's Day he told the story about "Mean Old Momma," and the pain that she saved him from, because she was mean. He thought it was mean; it later turned out to be love. He became a very successful man.

So, General George Marshall's problem was to change him—the American soldier—from a free-wheeling independent to a man who contributed strength and unity to the body, persevering through the hardships and privations and doing it in a good morale.

I am going to quote another source: a very famous book (probably very few of you have read it) called, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, written by Barbara W. Tuchman. This comes from page 32, covering the same subject about training.

For plebe's year at West Point in 1900, the description was not inappropriate. Hazing had reached such an extreme at this time that, after the withdrawal and subsequent death of two cadets from causes attributed to hazing, it brought on a congressional investigation in February of 1901.

Among those required to testify (much against his will) was Douglas MacArthur, in the class a year ahead of Stilwell, who had lain on his cot in convulsions after a session of 'exercising.' [This is what his fellow plebes had done to him.]

Plebes were made to squat over bayonets; to run naked while buckets of cold water were thrown upon them; to be hanged by their thumbs; or to stand in a tub on their heads with water lapping into their noses; to hold a rifle at extended arms for long periods; to be sweated (that is wrapped in blankets and raincoats in July); to swallow Tabasco sauce; or to eat vast quantities of food, such as a plateful of molasses or 200 prunes; to engage in forced fights; or to eat meals under the table; and to suffer various other humiliations.

The practice was not entirely wanton. Its excuse was that (like the rigid routines of the official regime) it was said to teach self-control, resistance to panic, and above all, acceptance of authority.

The core of the military profession is discipline, and the essence of discipline is obedience. Since this does not come naturally to men of independent and rational minds, they must train themselves in the habit of obedience on which lives and the fortunes of battle may someday depend. Reasonable orders are easy enough to obey. It is the capricious, bureaucratic, and plain idiotic demands that form the habit of discipline.

Now I want to remind you that God has not treated any of us that way. He has treated us with patience, out of respect for our weaknesses and disobedience. He calls the weak of the world. People like MacArthur and General Stilwell—they were some of the strong and the great and the mighty of this world, and look at the way their government, as it were, was treating them.

But what happened to these men has a Biblical principle behind it. I want you to turn with me to the book of Luke. Jesus is speaking.

Luke 16:10 He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust in much.

The lesson of this parable is that the way a person fulfills a small task is the evidence of whether he can be entrusted with a larger one. Being trustworthy, even in the face of disagreeable and sometimes painful duties, is an admirable character trait. By nature, brethren, we love to boast of big things. But, Jesus often spoke of the importance of little things.

Life, brethren, is made up of little things, day by day things, which may not seem big at the moment, but are none-the-less a part of the larger fabric of life in which we are being set into. The sufferings of training camp are small, brethren, compared to the horrors of actual war.

But the sufferings of the training are designed to produce discipline, self-control, endurance, and above all (in the case of the military) to perfect unquestioning obedience. Boy, God would love to see unquestioning obedience from you and me. But in many cases, brethren, it takes a bunch of faith that maybe we have not grown to yet.

General MacArthur quotes General Philip Sheridan, who was one of the generals in the Civil War. He does this on page 7 of *Reminiscences of Douglas MacArthur*. Sheridan said that "battles are won on the drill field, not the battle field." Maybe that is somewhat overstated, but it does make an important statement in regard to the importance of preparation. Again, on page 14 of *Reminiscences of Douglas MacArthur*, MacArthur said that "preparation is the key to victory."

Brethren, we are being prepared and fighting a war at one and the same time. We are getting a double dose of it. The army recruits were not trained until they were actually in the army, but not in battle. We are being trained by God in the midst of the battle. Interesting. And that is one major reason, brethren, why God has not treated us the way those men were treated at West Point. God has been gentle with us, picking His spots to see how we will respond whenever the pressure is really on us.

He is always there ready to jerk us away if need be. In war, there is never a time for coasting. Famed football coach Vince Lombardi made this statement: "Success is 75% mental. Mental toughness is character in action. Go all out on every play, you never know which one will cause you to win."

I John 3:8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Now I know of a certainty that God is not out to destroy us. But He is out to destroy the works of Satan in us. So it is helpful for us to remember that our "David" was already defeated thir "Goliath." In a military sense, Christ has broken through Satan's line and we now must follow His lead through the same lines. We have got to get over this feeling that God is trying to get something from us.

He wants things done His way, because it is good for us and good for His purpose. So we need to honestly evaluate ourselves as to which points we are fudging on in order to make it easy on ourselves. There are so many examples in the Bible of people who insisted on doing it their own way.

There is another message—another aspect of this message—that is of extreme importance for us to understand as an aid to successfully fighting this battle. Earlier I quoted from *The United States Fighting Man's Manual*, and it said there that "an indomitable will to resist is not acquired overnight nor can it be supplied by military training alone, but it rests on other character traits..."

From the same *United States Fighting Man's Manual*, this time in the Code of Conduct section, page 3, it says,

If I am captured, I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and to aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

Now with that in mind, let us go to Hebrews 11. "I will accept no favors from the enemy."

Hebrews 11:32-35 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets; who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

Brethren, what does it take for me for you to give up in our battle against Satan? How highly do I value what I presently have in this world? What will make me break faith and accept deliverance other than one from God?

This makes all of the difference in the world. No amount of training can take the place of faith in God and His good news.

Romans 1:16 tells us that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Faith and trust in God and His work is the motivating power to keep us on course.

Again from *Reminiscences of Douglas MacArthur*, MacArthur quotes a letter written by a Mr. Tomas Confessor. He was a Filipino, a governor, to a Dr. Frim Caram who had urged Mr. Confessor to collaborate with the Japanese invaders then occupying the Philippines. This is a rather long quote, but it is really meaningful. This is not coming from an American; it is coming from a Filipino who undoubtedly had Christian training.

You may not agree with me; but the truth is that our present war is a blessing in disguise to our people, and that the burden it imposes and the hardships it has brought upon us are a test of our character to determine the sincerity of our convictions and the integrity of our souls.

In other words, this war has placed us under the crucible to assay the metal of our being—for as a people, we have been living the last forty years under a regime of justice and liberty regulated only by universally accepted principles of constitutional government.

We have come to enjoy personal privileges and civil liberties without much struggle and without undergoing the pain to attain them. They were a gift from a generous and magnanimous people—the people of The United States of America. Now that Japan is attempting to destroy those liberties, should we not exert any effort to defend them? Should we not be willing to suffer for their defense?

If our people are undergoing hardship now, we are doing it gladly. It is because we are willing to pay the price for those liberties and privileges. You cannot become wealthy by honest means without sweating heavily.

You may have read, I am sure, the story of Lincoln who held firmly to the conviction that the secession of the Southern states from the Northern was wrong. Consequently, when he became President and the Southern states seceded, he did not hesitate to use force to compel them to remain in the union.

The immediate result was civil war that involved the country in the throes of a terrible armed conflict that, according to reliable historians, produced proportionally more loss of lives, hardship, and misery than World War I.

The sufferings of the people of the South were terrible, but the union was saved; and America has become thereby one of the strongest and most respected nations on the surface of the earth.

If Lincoln had revised his convictions, and sacrificed them for the sake of peace and tranquility as you did, a fatal catastrophe would have befallen the people of America.

With this lesson of history clearly before us, I prefer to follow Lincoln's example than yours and your fellow puppets. I will not surrender as long as I can stand on my feet. The people may suffer now, and suffer more during the next months; but to use a words of St. Paul, the apostle, '...the sufferings of this present are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.'

I Peter 4:1-2 joined together with Hebrews 12:1 said that Jesus endured "because of the joy that was set before Him." We are to arm ourselves with the same attitude and with the same vision.

He also said in Hebrews that there is a great cloud of witnesses who went before us, because they caught and believed the same exciting vision.

We, brethren, must work to develop the sense of history, as though we are comrades in arms of those that have gone before us. We are connected to those children of God from the past and at one and the same time, we are becoming the bridge into the World Tomorrow.

We need to meditate on how precious these liberties that came to us unbidden are—the knowledge of God Himself, freedom from the slavery to sin, the mercy of God, and the awesome destiny before us. Are they worth the sacrifices? Each one of us has to answer that question himself.

During the Civil War, it used to be if somebody from the opposing side would voluntarily surrender to them without fighting, they would just take them and put them to work somewhere. They were actually free. They just were not involved in the war anymore. But eventually the South got tired of that, because they discovered that these people were no good—these traitors to their cause, to their side, wherever they are. They were told that they would immediately be put into some very bad prisons. They would not be free any longer. Do you know why? Because they found that a traitor cannot be trusted.

Now think of that in relation to God. Should we give in, should we give up, should we fail to resist, should we allow ourselves to go to the other side? God cannot trust us. He does not want traitors in His kingdom.

Every one of the disciples betrayed Jesus. At least they repented and came back stronger than they ever were before.

I want to give one final quote from General Douglas MacArthur. It is from page 277 from his *Reminiscences of Douglas MacArthur*. In it, he is quoting a Japanese man who witnessed the signing of the peace treaty between Japan and The United States—the one that ended World War II. It was done on the battleship *Missouri*. This man was there and witnessed this.

This was the speech in which MacArthur made that famous statement that we have had our last chance, because the weapons of warfare are so great now that we are going to blow everything to kingdom come (I am just paraphrasing what he said). This man's name was Toshikazu Kase. This is what he wrote,

While the destroyer sped home, I wrote down hurriedly the impressions of the surrender ceremony which Shigemitsu [the Japanese General] took to the throne [Hirohito] immediately after our return to the capital, as the Emperor was anxiously waiting for his report. At the end of this report, in which I dwelt at length upon the superb address of the Supreme Commander [meaning MacArthur], I raised a question whether it would have been possible for us, had we have been victorious, to embrace the vanquished with a similar magnanimity? Clearly, it would have been different. Returning from the audience, Shigemitsu told me that the Emperor nodded with a sigh in agreement. Indeed, a distance inexpressible by number separates us [America from Japan]. After all, we were not beaten on the battle field by dint of superior arms. We were defeated in the spiritual contest by virtue of a nobler idea. The real issue was moral, beyond all the powers of algebra to compute.

Quite an insight! Brethren, we are the weak of the world; but we have a great God on our side. Philippians 1:6 says that He will carry right on through to the end with His part. Suffering is what results from the sacrifices necessary to do things right, and at the same time overcome, Satan.

I want you to turn to me now for two scriptures. One is Romans 8:31-37 (a very familiar scripture).

Romans 8:31-37 What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who that condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Now one final scripture in I Corinthians 16:13-14, brief and to the point. Again, from the Phillips:

I Corinthians 16:13-14 (Phillips) Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, live like men, be strong! Let everything you do be done in love.