

Sermon: “A Good Soldier” — by Mary M. Bodie

2Ti.2:1 “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

God doesn't ask us to be strong in ourselves, but to lay hold of His grace. A good soldier endures hardness in the spiritual as well as the natural. You know how soldiers have to endure hardness today — they endure hardness by going away from their homes and families and going with the call of the government. If they try to get out of it, they usually get themselves in a worse place; I am speaking of the natural soldier.

If you are looking for an easy place, do not seek to be a soldier. God chooses His soldiers.

Act.22:1 “Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense which I make now unto you.”

Paul is speaking in his own defense.

Act.22:2 “(And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)”

Those people who were having Paul arrested were the Jews who did not like him when he turned from their religion.

Act.22:4 “And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.”

Before he was saved, Paul persecuted the Christians. He was a soldier in the natural; he was strong, brave, and loyal to what he thought was truth. Some people are bold and zealous for the way they believe is right.

Act.22:5 “As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.”

He was bringing them bound to be put to death. God had a hand in Paul's life. He is the Mighty God of creation and knows all about us! God had His eye on Paul for a long time, because Paul was a chosen vessel. Paul was going in a different manner and way; but God wouldn't let him do it for long.

Act.22:8 “And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.”

This One whom you have been persecuting — I AM that One! I know Paul could hardly believe his eyes or ears.

Act.22:10 “And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.”

Paul didn't talk back to the Lord but surrendered right now. He had to be knocked down only once. Did you ever get broken up that way and fall down

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before the Lord? He can take us down to where we think we aren't anything. He doesn't need to take a long time about it either. One blow, and the Lord turned Paul from his course (action). The Lord had a hand in his life and already had determined what he was to do.

Act.22:11 “And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.”

This one who had led others to death and destruction had to be led by the hand.

Act.22:12-14 “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.”

This is said to the soldiers whom God chooses. He cannot choose everyone to be a soldier because some of them would go AWOL (away without leave). They would not fight this battle as Paul did. When the God of our fathers chooses His soldiers, they have to learn to do what the will of God is and not their own. In the natural, those in the army have to do what they are told; they have to obey every order. Some boys have tried to do as they please and they found themselves in a straight jacket in solitary confinement. One must do things that go against their natural feelings. When God says “Go,” you have to go. When God says “Do,” you have to do. He doesn't choose every Christian for His service because they wouldn't obey orders.

Act.22:20 “And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.”

He held the clothes of those who threw stones. He wasn't the big man like Absalom. God didn't call a big man to be the greatest man of this age, He call a little man who was mighty, loyal, and true. Paul got hold of this Gospel from heaven...this Good News...that man can be saved without doing anything but believe. Tell it everywhere that God has salvation for everyone who believes. He puts His own righteousness over on us.

The way of a good soldier is found in 2 Corinthians 22-33. Here, Paul boasts in the glory of Christ. Paul was a Hebrew and it was an honor to be a Hebrew because they came into the line of teaching before the Gentiles did. Paul was the best laborer God ever had. He was a good soldier. He never turned away from the will of God, no matter where it took him or how much he suffered.

2Co.11:28 “Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

He wept with those who wept. Paul prayed for the churches, and loved them. They were God's sheep and his. He received letters from all manner of

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people in terrible disaster and took care of each church...taking an interest in it. When you are really a good soldier of Jesus Christ, you are interested in all of the churches. In Revelation 2:7, 10-11, we read of some of the rewards of a good soldier.

1Co.9:7 “Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?”

Paul is saying that the natural soldiers are paid and get some remuneration for their services.

1Co.9:9 “For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?”

Oxen are a type of the soldier of Christ.

1Co.9:16 “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”

Paul had to go on in spite of the attitude of government or people. He went on without anything of this world.

1Co.9:17 “For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.”

See how God takes over? He is on the throne, managing His people and His Church. In Galatians 1:8-9, Paul write to the effect that it would be woe unto him if he preached not the gospel.

1Co.9:18 “What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.”

His reward was that he could preach the Gospel without charge. To give out your natural things, as well as your spiritual things, is a glorious place in which to be. It doesn't pay very big dividends here on earth, but it will over in glory.

It is a privilege to give out the Truth without charging for it. If we need anything, God will send it along. Ask your Father, and see Him hand it down.

A HARDY SOLDIER

I DO NOT LOVE THE PLAINS, NOR E'EN THE VERDANT VALLEY;
CARE NOT FOR COUNTRY LANES, NOR CROWDED ALLEY;
BUT GIVE ME HILLS—THE TRAIL, THAT EVER SCORNS THE HOLLOW;
FAR UP ABOVE THE DALE, WHERE FEW DARE FOLLOW.

NO FEAR WITHIN MY BREAST, WHILE MOUNTAIN TOPS I'M SCALING;
ABOVE THE EAGLE'S NEST, BY POW'R UNFAILING;
FOR I DO LOVE THE CRAG, THE SUMMIT PEAK SO HOARY;
WHERE I MAY WAVE THE FLAG OF GRACE AND GLORY.

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HIGH OVER WOODED CREST AND MOSSY, RAGGED BOULDER;
BY AIR AND SUNLIGHT BLESSED, A HARDY SOLDIER.
SO LET ME HOLD MY WAY, BY NOTHING DAZED OR DAUNTED;
TO STAND AT CLOSE OF DAY WITH CHRIST ANOINTED.

IN YONDER HEAV'NLY PLACE THE GLORY BELLS ALL CHIMING;
I'LL PRAISE THE GOD OF GRACE, FOR STRENGTH, FOR CLIMBING;
TO HEIGHTS UPON THE THRONE, THO' SATAN FUMES AND RAGES;
WITH CHRIST MY VERY OWN, THROUGHOUT THE AGES.

CHORUS: OH, TEMPT ME NOT TO STAY IN VERDANT DALES TODAY,
FOR I MUST HIE AWAY, A HARDY SOLDIER.
I SCALE THE MOUNTAIN HEIGHT, WITH GLORY JUST IN SIGHT,
FOR CHRIST IS ALL MY MIGHT, I AM A SOLDIER.

