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## SOLDIERS OF CHRIST

Our nation as a whole shows respect to those who wear the military uniform. The vast majority appreciates those who voluntarily serve to defend our Constitution and nation. From the Revolutionary War to our war against terrorism, we know veterans who have willingly sacrificed time, life, and limb in service to this country. We know and respect those veterans who walk among us, as well as those soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice for our country. The fact that we have freedom of speech, assembly, worship, as well many other named and unnamed freedoms is because of our armed forces. We marvel at the bravery and selfless nature of such people, as well we should. Let us also pause to thank God for those brave souls who gave their lives so we could be free. When thinking about the bravery of soldiers, my mind often goes back to the Bible and remembers that Christ calls His children "soldiers" too. Four times in the King James Version, the word

"soldier" was used to describe Christians (Phil. 2:25; II Tim. 2:3-4; Phile. 2). Jesus also described soldiers in His kingdom when addressing Pilate in John 18:36. The weapons and armor a soldier in the Lord's army uses are cataloged in such passages as Ephesians 6:13-18 and II Corinthians 10:3-5. These passages ought to remind us that in addition to other things, God expects Christians to be soldiers for Him. **God Has Soldiers Today.** I am impressed with the description the apostle Paul gives of Epaphroditus and Archippus (Phil. 2:25; Phile. 2). He calls both of these men "*fellowsoldiers*." This means not only were these men spiritual soldiers, but so was Paul! These three (and others) were in a close relationship. They were *fellowsoldiers* in the struggle against Satan and evil. **God's Soldier Must Have Self-Control.** A similarity between a

physical soldier and a spiritual one is the battle that takes place in one's own body. Before our nation's soldiers go to war, they must be battle-ready through exercise, drills, and various means of training so they can meet the enemy and win. A soldier in Christ's army must be "spiritually fit," (Heb. 5:14; I Tim. 4:8) and fight the enemy from within (flesh/selfish interests) so that he will then be ready to fight Satan as well as help others in their battles against Satan. Jesus taught the necessity of making our own lives right before we try to "fix" others when He said, *"First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye"* (Matt. 7:5). The Corinthians were reminded that a spiritual soldier's duty was to bring *"into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"* (II Cor. 10:5). This theme is repeated when Timothy is told, *"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier"* (II Tim. 2:4). In order to be an acceptable soldier in the Lord's army, we must bring our wills into submission to Christ. We must defeat selfishness from within so we can fight Satan on every side!

**God's Soldiers Are Volunteers.** Just like the U.S. military, the Lord's army is composed of

volunteers. No one is "drafted" into the Lord's army. No one is saved against His will. For that matter, no one becomes lost against his will (Jas. 1:14-15)! For those who wish to go to Heaven, God has done everything necessary to help us go (Christ has come to earth, He shed His blood, The Holy Spirit has revealed the word, Jn. 3:16; Acts 20:28; II Pet. 1:20-21; etc.). In contrast, for those who wish to go to Hell, God has thrown up many obstacles to try to keep us from being lost in sin (The cross, gospel preaching, good examples, warnings, etc.)! For those who volunteer to be Christ's soldier, the Lord will save them and reward them with an eternity in Heaven (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 13:11). Just as in the U.S. military, so also, there are rules to follow in the Lord's army! Jesus said, *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (Jn. 4:23-24). By saying "must" Jesus was saying there is only one way of worship which pleases God! God's volunteer soldiers will do it His way, or not please God. Furthermore, just as in the U.S. military, there are entrance requirements for soldiers in the Lord's army. This means believing on Christ, repenting of sins, confessing Christ as the Son of God, and being baptized for the remission of sins (Jn. 8:24;

# FIFTH SUNDAY PHOTOS

Every fifth Sunday of the month, we try to highlight some of great things happening around our congregation that were captured through photography. If you happen to get a good picture of one of those great things, please feel free to post it on our Facebook page, tag us on Instagram (@wellsburgchurch), tweet us at @wellsburgchurch, or e-mail us at minister@wellsburgchurchofchrist.com with a little description of what is happening in the picture.



A great picture capturing the sweet bond between Patience and Linda, Bride and Grandmother of the Bride!



Mr. and Mrs. Kris and Patience Steele! God bless you with many years together!



Harold Marshall performed a beautiful emotional ceremony, speaking about making marriage work through teamwork and commitment. Thank you, Bud and Linda, for the example of love and commitment you give to us all in your own marriage to each other!



A great picture of Linda with her two sweet daughters, Laura and Paula.

It was a beautiful family filled ceremony, with Linda and Laura walking Patience down the aisle and Paula standing beside her as a bridesmaid.

Lk. 13:3; Rom. 10:10; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:36-38; etc.). In so doing, one can become a soldier, being added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47). Without doing this, one will never be the Lord's soldier, and hence will not be saved (Heb. 11:6; Jas. 1:17-24)! **God's Soldiers Must Fight.** Let us remember that the soldier in the Lord's army has work to do and a war to fight! He must fight against Satan and error. In II Corinthians 10:3-5, we learn, *"We do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."* The point is that soldiers in the Lord's army do not carry physical weapons, but spiritual ones. Having "exercised" our senses *"to discern both good and evil"* (Heb. 5:14), we then carry the *"sword of the spirit"* (Eph. 6:17) and wear *"the whole armor of God"*, the armor of light (Eph. 6:13-18; Rom. 13:12) into battle against spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12). In so doing, we are casting down imaginations, i.e., "arguments" (ALT, ESV, NKJ, RSV) made against God and His word, ready to expose folks to the truth and lead them to Christ (Eph. 5:11).

Having first examined ourselves, we can then help others and lead them in the way that is right and cannot be wrong! **God's Soldiers Must Endure.** The U.S. military is composed of those who join for various periods of time. Some are even "career" soldiers, who retire from active duty after having spent 20 years or more in active service. While we show gratitude to those who serve in the U.S. armed forces, regardless of tenure; in the Lord's army, God expects us to volunteer for life! We not only volunteer for life, but we give our lives as a living sacrifice to Christ in gratitude for what He did for us (Rom. 12:1-2; II Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20). This is quite a commitment! In addition to this, Christ expects us to endure whatever this world throws at us for our lifetime so that we can have a home in Heaven one day (II Cor. 4:17). Just as U.S. soldiers must endure pain and suffering, and sacrifice themselves for their country, so also Christ expects this of His soldiers! Jesus stated it this way: *"He that endureth to the end shall be saved"* (Matt. 10:22). To the church in Smyrna, He said, *"be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life"* (Rev. 2:10). The apostle Paul wrote Timothy and said, *"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"* (II Tim. 2:3). While