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SOLDIERS OF CHRIST

I am sure we know many who have served in our armed forces in this country. Whether a family member, neighbor, etc., many have served in this capacity. As I thought about soldiers in our nation, my mind went back to the Bible and remembered 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 spiritual in nature and cataloged in such passages as Ephesians 6:13-18 and II Corinthians 10:3-5. These occasions should remind us that God expected Christians in the first century to be soldiers for Him. **God Has Soldiers Today.** Such an expectation is not unique, for He has had “soldiers” in His army since the church began and up to the present day. 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 we could name) were in a close relationship. They are *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 a physical soldier goes to war, he must be battle-ready through exercise, drills, and various means of training to prepare him for whatever the enemy might throw at him. A soldier in Christ’s army may or may not be a physically-fit person (I Tim. 4:8), but this soldier must be “spiritually fit” (Heb. 5:14; I Tim. 4:8). He must fight the enemy from within (flesh/selfish interests) so that he will then be ready to help others in their battles. Jesus taught the necessity of making our 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). 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.

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 forced to do the Lord's will (Rev. 22:17). No one is told that he is a saved person against His will. For that matter, no one becomes a lost person against his will (Jas. 1:14-15)! For those who wish to go to Heaven, God has done everything necessary to help you (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 you from being lost in your sin (The cross, gospel preaching, good examples, warnings, etc.)! For those who volunteer to be soldiers, the Lord will save them and reward them with an eternity in Heaven (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 13:11; etc.). Does this mean there are no rules

to follow in the Lord's army? Of course, not! Jesus said, *"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (Jn. 4:23-24). In using the word "must," Jesus was saying there is only one way to worship God, which pleases Him! God's volunteer soldiers will do it His way or will not please God. Furthermore, 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; Lk. 13:3; Rom. 10:10; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:36-38; etc.). In so doing, one can become a soldier and be 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.** We briefly mentioned this earlier, but let us remember that the soldier in the Lord's army is not one who has nothing to do! He must fight a fight against Satan and error. In II Corinthians 10:3-5, we learn, *"For though we walk in the flesh, 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."* In studying this section, the point is that

BIBLE TRIVIA

C H A L L E N G E

DIRECTIONS: After searching through your Bible, circle which answer is correct.

1. **Jesus said He spoke in parables "because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they ____."**

- a) Speak
- b) Understand
- c) Whistle
- d) Breakdance

2. **Seed sown beside the road is snatched away by the ____ one.**

- a) Crazy
- b) Fidgety
- c) Shy
- d) Evil

3. **Wheat and tares will be allowed to grow together until the ____.**

- a) Harvest
- b) Birthday
- c) Evening
- d) Sunset

4. **When the mustard seed is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a ____.**

- a) Turtleneck
- b) Harmonica
- c) Swatch
- d) Tree

5. **The ____ of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.**

- a) Kingdom
- b) Jello
- c) Noodles
- d) Pudding

6. **Jesus did not speak to the crowds without a ____.**

- a) Powerpoint
- b) Lazerpointer
- c) Pulpit
- d) Parable

7. **"I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things ____ since the foundation of the world."**

- a) Silly
- b) Fantastic
- c) Hidden
- d) Frightening

8. **The man who found the treasure hidden in the field sold all he had and bought the field from ____ over it.**

- a) Fear
- b) Joy
- c) Suspicion
- d) Confusion

9. **The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine ____.**

- a) Turtles
- b) Fannypacks
- c) Pearls
- d) Frogs

10. **At the end of the age, ____ will take out the wicked from among the righteous.**

- a) God
- b) Jesus
- c) Holy Spirit
- d) Angels

- 1) B. Reference: Mt. 13:13
 2) D. Reference: Mt. 13:19
 3) A. Reference: Mt. 13:30
 4) D. Reference: Mt. 13:31-32
 5) A. Reference: Mt. 13:33
 6) D. Reference: Mt. 13:34
 7) C. Ps. 78:2; Mt. 13:35
 8) B. Mt. 13:44
 9) C. Mt. 13:45
 10) D. Mt. 13:49

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. We are 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 has those who join for various periods of time. Some join for a few years, and others are "career" men. In the Lord's army, God expects us to volunteer *for life*! We not only volunteer for life, but also 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). Galatians 2:20 says it this way, "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" This is quite a commitment, is it not? In addition to this, Christ expects us to endure whatever this world throws at us for our life so that we can see a home in Heaven one day (II Cor. 4:17). 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). In continuing this thought, the apostle Paul wrote Timothy and said, "*Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (II Tim. 2:3). While this can be a hard life to lead, it is not an impossible task! Christ has not asked us to do something that is impossible to do! He told us to do the things He knows we *can* do! **Conclusion.** Sometimes we sing the song, "Am I a soldier of the cross?" Why not get that song out and answer the question yourself? If you are not a soldier of Christ, why not (Mk. 16:16)? Another song we sing is "Soldiers of Christ, Arise!" Why not rise to the challenge before you, Christian? Stop being slack in your duty, and do what the Lord says. In volunteering for the Lord's work, you have committed to the greatest thing you can do on earth. Live faithfully for Him so you can one day enjoy the promised rest in Heaven! "Thousands died because they considered sin as nothing! Despite the pleading of Jeremiah, the Jews refused to walk in "*the old paths*" (Jer. 6:16). In the face of Ezekiel, they were hard-hearted and impudent as he pled with them to return (Ezek. 3:7). Others such as Elijah and Elisha, Hosea and Micah, Samuel and Malachi, as well as scores of others, both named and unnamed, (but all known to God), continued preaching God's word for the purpose of getting people to repent of their sins. – Jarrod Jacobs