

BEING A NEW ENLISTEE—IN THE LORD’S ARMY!

INTRODUCTION: Notice on your outline the difference between the various military observances:

Armed Forces Day (3rd Saturday in May) is for those *still in* their uniform.

Veterans Day (November 11th) is for those who *hung up* their uniform.

Memorial Day (last Monday in May) is for those who *never made it out of* their uniform.

So tomorrow—Memorial Day—we will be *commemorating* (as opposed to *celebrating*) those who gave the *ultimate sacrifice* in serving their country—their *very lives!* Most of you know that I was a Recruiter for the National Guard for 7 years and enlisted roughly 150 people during that time—including my two sons!

Thankfully, no one that I “put in boots” has died while serving their country, even though a number of them deployed—and many of them more than once.

Many of you also know from Facebook—and I believe I’ve also mentioned it from the pulpit—that I have been reading a book entitled *Holiness* by J.C. Ryle. Some of what I’ve read recently challenged me both as a former *military recruiter*—and now as *Pastor*. First the *recruiter* part:

“Be ashamed to use the vulgar arts [deceptive practices] of a recruiting Sergeant. Do not speak only of the uniform, the pay, and the glory; speak also of the enemies, the battle, the armour, the watching, the marching, and the drill.” (pg 77)

This quote certainly got me to thinking. What did I emphasize when I was recruiting people into the National Guard? Rest assured that I was *truthful* with them—none of the people that I “put in” ever accused me of lying to them—at least to my face!

But...did I paint the *full* picture? For every *benefit*, did I mention the *danger*? For every *reward*, did I warn of the *risks*? I’m *not so sure* that I did! In fact, I’m sure I emphasized “the good” way more than I mentioned “the bad!” I remember a young man saying that very thing to me one time!

Now for what **Ryle** said that spoke to me as a Pastor: “Conversion”—meaning coming to Christ for salvation and becoming a child of God—“is not putting a man in an arm-chair and taking him easily to heaven. It is the beginning of a mighty conflict....” (pg 69)

And—just like the quote about being a recruiter—this quote got me to thinking. Again, I had to ask myself if I am painting the *full picture*. Am I warning new believers of the *mighty conflict* they have just entered? Am I making sure they know about *the new enemies* they now face—and that the Christian life is *not an easy one*? Am I emphasizing too much of “the good”—and not enough of *the bad*?

And—once again—I realized that I need to do a better job of *warning about the bad*—the challenges and difficulties of the Christian life—and *not just emphasize the good*. So I want to try to correct that a little bit this morning. I want us to consider the *new battle* we are in...and the *new enemy* that we face. And I’m going to do that by *comparing the similarities* between what happens when a citizen becomes a soldier—with what happens when a unbeliever becomes a believer. Please take your Bibles and turn to II Timothy 2:3-4.

First, we **1. Enlist under a new Commander**

A. The citizen-turned-soldier’s new Commander

Prior to enlisting in the military, a citizen—in the U.S., anyway—doesn’t really have a human *commander* in their life. They have *their parents*, of course, but parents can’t *dock your pay* for missing dinner or not doing what you are told—unless, of course, they pay you an allowance!

Parents also can’t *throw you in jail* for breaking curfew! They can throw you *out of the house*—if you are over 18—but they don’t have the authority to throw you into the brig!

Once you enlist in the military, however, that all changes. You have a new “boss” that is “bossier”—and more powerful—than any boss you have ever had in your entire life!

Your commander—or designated representative—tells you when to eat...and what to eat.

--They tell you when to sleep...and when to wake up...and **what to do** after you wake up.
--They tell you what to wear...and when to wear it...and how to wear it.
--For all intents and purposes, they “**own you**”—and can make life extremely miserable if you choose to ignore what they say!
--Your new mission—and mindset—becomes: “Mine is not to question why, mine is just to do—or die!”

Next let’s consider... B. The unbeliever-turned-believer’s new Commander

When we are born again and become a child of God, we also “enlist” under a new commander. According to vs 3, we are to become a “good soldier of Jesus Christ.” Verse 4 tells us not to become entangled with the things in this life. Why? That we may please Him—God—who has chosen us to be a soldier. **Hebrews 2:10** “For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the **Captain of their salvation** perfect through sufferings.”
Who is the captain of our salvation that endured sufferings? Jesus!

It is true that we have a **new Father** when we are born again, but we also have a new **Commander**—a new boss...a new authority figure in our life—who has the absolute authority to “tell us what to do.”

I Cor 6:19-20 “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and **ye are not your own**? ²⁰ For ye are **bought with a price**: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” **Glorify God**—do that which pleases God—because **you belong to Him!**

Our motivation, though, **should not be fear of punishment!** Instead, our obedience to Christ should be based **on our love for Him** for first loving us! **II Cor 4:14-15** “For the **love of Christ** constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: ¹⁵ And that He died for all, that **they which live** should not henceforth live **unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them**, and rose again.”

Jesus died for you! And because He died for you, **don’t live for you—live for Him!**

I Cor 7:23 “Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.” Here it is again! You’ve been bought with a price. If you are **not to serve men**, who are you to serve? Him; Jesus!

How about you? If you are a child of God, **God is your new Commander**. Are you submitting to Him and trying to please Him? We need to be, don’t we? Some of Paul’s first words after he was saved were, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6)

There is a second similarity between a citizen becoming a soldier and an unbeliever becoming a believer and it is this... they both: **2. Enter into a new battle**

A. The citizen-turned-soldier’s new battle

What is the new battle that a citizen-turned-soldier enters into? First, the obvious.

i. An outer, visible enemy

Who is the visible enemy? The military doesn’t always know **who** the next battle will be against, so often times you are trained to handle multiple kinds of enemies in a variety of scenarios. It might be desert training...or mountain training...or urban warfare. You also are taught to identify **aircraft** so you know which planes are friendly—and which belong to the enemy!

Not the only enemy, though. There is also... **ii. An inner, invisible enemy**

One “enemy” that we can easily forget about is **ourselves!** New military members often battle **stubbornness**—they don’t want to be told what to do because they want to be in charge! Some also battle **laziness**—they don’t want to do the work of staying in shape! And many new military members battle **fears**. They have never been in combat—and don’t want to be shot at or hit by a howitzer round or mortar!

A citizen-turned-soldier enters a new battle. They have a **new “outer” enemy** that they must learn of and defend themselves against, as well as discovering a **new “inner” battle** that they may not have

experienced before. But what about an unbeliever-turned-believer; a new convert? Is the battle similar—or different? The **correct answer is “Yes”**—it is both similar and different 😊!

B. Similarities of the unbeliever-turned-believer’s new battle

First, the similarities. Number 1, we have... **i. An enemy outside of us**

When we leave Satan’s family—and become a child of God—we have a new enemy. Who is our new enemy? I just told you, right? Satan—aka, the devil!

I Peter 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant; because **your adversary the devil**, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”

Satan is **not just** a roaring lion seeking to devour you, though. According to John 8:44, He is a liar...and the father of lies...and a murderer from the beginning.

And he is not happy that you have **left his army**—and enlisted **into God’s army**. Listen carefully—Satan will **attack you more** when you become a child of God than he ever did before! It makes sense that he would do that, but often times we are **surprised** by that.

When you are in Satan’s spiritual family, you are under a spell of deception, so to speak. You are lulled into thinking and believing **that everything is fine**...and that life is good. And so Satan doesn’t **bother you**. He doesn’t want you to wake up or question things! He wants you to stay asleep—and deceived!

But once you “wake up”—and become a child of God—he **comes after you** with a renewed vengeance. Why? So he can try to pull you back into his family and army? No; he can’t do that! But what he does want to do is **make you an ineffective soldier** in God’s army!

Satan is **not everywhere-present** like God is, though, so he needs help. He has minions—demons; fallen angels—that help him in his deception and distraction and discouragement.

Please turn to Eph 6, beginning with vs 11. “...that ye may be able to stand against the wiles”—the deceptive tricks—of the devil.” Now vs 12. Satan has help in this spiritual battle. Notice the words here are **plural**—meaning more than one: principalities...powers...rulers...

Similarity #2? **ii. The enemy within us**

Just as a citizen-turned-soldier finds out that sometimes **he himself** is his own worst enemy, the unbeliever-turned-believer discovers the same thing—but even more so!

You’re in Ephesians; turn now to Galatians.

Notice vs 17. “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit...” The “flesh” here does not refer to **your skin**—it refers to your **selfish, sinful nature**.

--Your sinful nature “lusts”—meaning **sets its desire against**—the Spirit, meaning the Holy Spirit.

--“...and the Spirit”—again, a reference to the H.S.—sets His desire against the flesh—your sinful nature.

--“...and these”—your sin nature and the Holy Spirit now inside of you—“are contrary the one to another.” The result? “...so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

In other words, you fail to do the things that you desire to do—the good things that please God. How do you know it is a failure to do **good** things? Because Paul tells the Romans the same thing—only he elaborates on it more!

Romans 7:18-20 “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that **which is good** I find not. ¹⁹ **For the good** that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. ²⁰ Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”

--In vs 19, Paul says the **good that he desires** to do, he does not—he fails to do.

And...the **evil that he does not want to do**, he ends up doing! Why? Because of the battle between his natural self—his sin nature—and the Holy Spirit. And that is the experience of every true believer!

--**Before we are born again**, we only have **one nature**—our sin nature! We may battle our conscience at times, but there really isn’t much of a conflict inside of us.

--**But after we are born again**, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us. Instead of having only one nature, we **now have two!** And because they are **the opposite**, there is a **battle inside of us** like there never was before!

So both a citizen-turned-soldier—and an unbeliever-turned-believer—have a **new battle**. They have a new “outer enemy”—and they have a new battle **within** them. Not only are there similarities, though, there are also differences and that is what we are going to look at next.

C. Differences in the unbeliever-turned-believer’s new battle

What are the differences? I’m sure there are more, but I want us to consider two.

i. The certainty of the battle

It is possible—and happens fairly often—that a citizen-turned-soldier **never** experiences actual combat. Some of you here this morning did a 3- or 4-year stint in the military and didn’t see combat. My guess is there are people who join the military **who “bank on” never having** to experience a real battlefield.

But that is **not true**—and is **never true**—of an unbeliever-turned-believer! They **will see combat**—period! There will **be battles**—no exceptions! I suppose you **could argue that the thief on the cross** did not have much of a spiritual battle because he didn’t live long after he was born again, but he is certainly the exception—not the rule! Mark it down—if you are a believer, **you will see combat!** Not very good news, is it?

The **bad news gets worse**, though, because there is a second difference: **ii. The constancy of the battle**

What do I mean by the **constancy** of the battle? The fact that it is constant—**it never ends!**

--The **spiritual battle** against the flesh, the world, and the devil does not end!

--The **battlefront does not move elsewhere** and give you a little break—it is constant!

--Your Commander can’t send you **out of the combat zone for R & R**—rest and relaxation—because everywhere you go, **the battlefield is there!**

--There is **no rest**...there is **no reprieve**...there is **no refuge** where Satan cannot bombard you—at least **in this life!** But there is **in the next!** And although we cannot really dig into this last point due to time, I do want to end on an encouraging note.

Not only does the citizen-turned-soldier—and unbeliever-turned-believer—both enlist under a new Commander and enter into a new battle, they both are...

3. Encouraged by the prospect of awards and promotions

You don’t have to **have served in the military** to know that individuals who **excel in their duties**—at least in the old military—are **given awards and promotions**. Is not that even **more true** in our service to the **God of heaven?** Notice the verses of encouragement from God that He gives us in His Word:

I Timothy 4:7-8 “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸Henceforth there is **laid up for me a crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and **not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.**”

--Do you see yourself in that verse? The crown of righteousness was **not for Paul only**—it is for all those that love His appearing. Are you looking forward to the return of Jesus? **Then keep fighting; don’t quit!**

Romans 8:13 “For I reckon that the **sufferings of this present time** are **not worthy to be compared** with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

What is the “**award**” we have to look forward to? Have God saying to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the **joy** of thy Lord.” But to hear that, **we need to be faithful**, don’t we?

What is the **promotion** we have to look forward to? Glory...heaven...being with Jesus in the place He has prepared for us. Please turn to Revelation 21:4 so you can see this verse for yourself. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

--That is what Monica is enjoying right now...and Bev...and Jeanne. And that is what we can look forward to enjoying—if Jesus is our Savior. But our time has not yet come. We’re in a battle, my friends. If I have not warned you enough of that in the past, I certainly tried to rectify that today.

When you became a child of God, you entered into a battle: a battle against the devil who wants to deceive and devour you—and a battle against your sin nature that wants to distract and resist you. The battle is certain—and it is constant—but there is a future day when it **will end**.

Some of you have seen this quote from Ryle when I posted it on Facebook, but many of you haven't.

Ryle: "The time present, no doubt, is NOT a time of ease. It is a time of watching and praying, fighting and struggling, believing and working. But it is only for a few years. The time FUTURE is the season of rest and refreshing. Sin shall be cast out. Satan shall be bound. And, best of all, it shall be a rest FOR EVER."

And as the song writer so aptly put it, *It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus!*

PRAY

So, what is it that God wants you **to do today**?

1. First and foremost, you need to ask yourself this question: Whose army am I in? Am I in the Lord's Army? Am I a child of God?

If not, here is one possible reason—you are under the deception of Satan!

--You are believing false things like there is no God...or afterlife...or heaven...or hell!

OR --You are believing false things like "God will let everyone into heaven"—or I can work my way to heaven!

Satan is a liar...and the father of lies...and a murderer from the beginning. Believe what God says—not what Satan says!

2. If you are a child of God—if you are in the Lord's army—what does God want you to do?

--Don't be surprised when the enemy attacks—you are in a battle!

--Depend on God's armor...and strength...and wisdom in this battle

--Choose to please the one who has made you a soldier—and who died for you

--Be faithful—don't quit!