

STAND FAST AND FIGHT

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The whole point of a soldier's being well-armed is not for the parade ground the reviewing stand, or mock maneuvers, but for the field of combat. The reason we are to "TAKE UP THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD" is that we "MAY BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND IN THE EVIL DAY, AND, HAVING DONE ALL, TO STAND" (Ephesians 6:13). The *evil day* is best understood as the day of combat, trial, temptation, persecution, or opposition.

Exceptional challenges come to us and to the entire church on occasion, and these mark turning points for good or ill. The battle over anti-ism in the 1950s and the fierce battle over the very identity of the church in which we continue to be engaged are typical. The battle in recent years over fellowship with once conservative brethren is another example. Besides these are the individual spiritual battles the Christian soldier encounters frequently as he takes up his cross daily to follow his Commander-in-chief (**Luke 9:23**).

In the daily fray is where the individual enlistee needs to employ the armaments and weapons supplied by the Lord. Each of us will stand or fall spiritually for the most part, not in one great pitched battle, but in the daily skirmishes that add up to the prolonged warfare. We have a responsibility to stand and fight. Rather than cowering, compromising or running from the foe, we are to "RESIST THE DEVIL: AND HE WILL RUN FROM US" (**James 4:7**). We are not to "GIVE PLACE TO THE DEVIL" (**Ephesians 4:27**) by surrendering or abandoning the Truth. We are to "HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF DARKNESS, BUT RATHER EVEN REPROVE THEM" (**Ephesians 5:11**).

We, like Paul, must be "SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL" (**Philippians 1:16**). Soldiers of Christ are obligated to "CONTEND EARNEST FOR THE FAITH" (**Jude 3**). The worthy spiritual warrior must be "STEDFAST, UNMOVABLE, ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD" (**1 Corinthians 15:38**). We are ordered to withstand the devil uncompromisingly in our faith (**1 Peter 5:8-9**).

When one staunchly stands for the Truth while those about him are retreating, compromising, and even deserting the heavenly kingdom's blood-stained banner, he will encounter opposition and suffering. The world will see that the faithful soldier pays a price for his dedication. There are dark clouds on the horizon that seem to threaten a coming storm of reprisals and restrictions against Christians the likes of which our nation has never experienced. Likewise, the bold and resolute soldier who dares expose positions of compromise and desertion among the brethren will find himself in their crosshairs.

Paul, who suffered so many perils, both from worldlings and from false brethren (**2 Corinthians 11:26**), perfectly exemplified the trait of determined faithfulness, yea, heroism, under enemy fire. He encouraged Timothy (and us): "WAR THE GOOD WARFARE" (**1 Timothy 1:18**), "FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF THE FAITH" (**6:12**), and "Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (**2 Timothy 2:3**). Such soldiers have the heartening promise of the Lord:

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“BLESSED ARE YE WHEN MEN SHALT REPROACH YOU, AND PERSECUTE YOU, AND SAY ALL MANNER OF EVIL AGAINST YOU FALSELY, FOR MY SAKE. REJOICE AND BE EXCEEDING GLAD: FOR GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN: FOR SO PERSECUTED THEY THE PROPHETS THAT WERE BEFORE YOU” (**Matthew 5:11-12**).