

## A Good Soldier • 2 Timothy 2:3-4

### I. INTRODUCTION • READ TEXT & PRAY

#### A. *Iwo Jima*

1. It was February 24, 1945, and the US Marines were engaged in the most grueling contest of WWII.
2. They had already rolled up the Japanese defenses on a dozen islands as they made their bloody way north, leaping from one island to the next, ever closer to the Japanese homeland
3. Now, they'd managed to make a beachhead on Iwo Jima – but the enemy was determined not to let them take the island.
  - a. the Japanese commander had ordered that no one surrender
  - b. and every Japanese soldier was to fight to the last bullet, then use their bayonet
4. The Marines gained ground, not miles but literally, *inches* at a time.
5. The Japanese were desperate to hang on to Iwo Jima;
  - a. it held two strategic air bases and was close to Japan
  - b. the airfields allowed American fighters to escort the bombers flying out of the Marianas Islands that were daily pummeling Japanese industry.
6. Without that fighter escort the American bombers were easy targets for the fearsome Japanese Zeros
7. So the enemy had spent 8 months fortifying Iwo Jima;
  - a. digging trenches and tunnels, building concrete bunkers and fortified gun emplacements.
  - b. Hundreds of tanks, artillery, anti-aircraft and 21,000 Japanese soldiers filled the island.
8. The Americans & Japanese both knew Iwo Jima might very well be the single most important strategic victory or loss of the War.
9. They also knew it would be the bloodiest and it lived up to their expectations.
10. Five days after landing on the shore, the Marines had managed to slog their way on to the slopes of Mt. Suribachi, the highest point, and considered to be the key in controlling the island.
11. When the Japanese guns mysteriously fell silent, Lieutenant-Colonel Johnson of the 28<sup>th</sup> Marines ordered First Lieutenant

Schrier to take a patrol to the top of Suribachi.

- a. Johnson handed Schrier an American Flag and told him to raise it on the peak
- b. Schrier led his 40 men up the north slope of Suribachi, all the while easy targets for Japanese marksmen, but nothing happened
- c. arriving at the peak, one of the men found a length of pipe, which they attached the flag to and hoisted it into place.
- d. it was then that the Japanese seemed to wake up
- e. seeing the American flag waving on Suribachi enraged them and they came out of their foxholes and trenches in a renewed assault on the American position
- f. but they were beaten back – now that the flag had been planted, the Americans weren't about to let it fall!
- g. realizing the psychological effect the flag had on both sides, 2-hours later the Marine commander ordered the first flag lowered and a *larger* flag raised in its place – one that could be seen, not only by those on Suribachi's slopes, but by the entire island and even the American support ships at sea.
- h. so at about noon on February 24, 1945 a larger flag was raised.
- i. Joe Rosenthal, one of the many photo-journalists who had joined the invasion force to chronicle the event, happened to be on hand at this second flag raising and snapped a few shots
- j. one of these became the classic picture we see today of the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima.
- k. it's possibly one of the best known photographs of all history and for many is the consummate military picture.

## **B. The Marines**

1. For those who know anything about the US Marines – that picture is the defining moment of their history.
2. It gives ample expression to their motto – *Semper Fidelis* – Always Faithful!
3. The US Marines are a special fighting force who are entrusted with the task of being the first ones into battle.
4. Their training is unique in that they take raw recruits and turn them into an effective and disciplined fighting force that can go just about anywhere and do just about anything.

5. Few would argue with me when I say that while *all* the armed forces have challenging boot camps, none is more so than the Marines.
  - a. they train harder and longer
  - b. because they are called on to face more difficult objectives

### **C. Today**

1. My message today is not a recruiting campaign for the US Marine Corps.
2. It's a recruiting campaign for another Marine corps – God's Marines!
3. You see, as Christians, we're engaged in a spiritual war that is every bit as real as WWI or II.
  - a. and the objectives are even more important!
  - b. we don't fight for geography but we battle for eternal souls
  - c. we don't fire physical weapons but we do wield spiritual ones.
4. In Ephesians 6, the Apostle Paul wrote,

**10 Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**

**11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

**12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.**

**13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**

- a. the picture Paul is painting here is one of a battlefield at the *end* of battle
- b. you know who the victor is because he's the last one standing!
- c. Paul says that we're engaged in a spiritual battle and when all is said and done, *we* must be the ones left standing!
- d. like that picture of the flag-raising on Iwo Jima – we're to raise the Cross of Christ as the banner of His victory over each of the battlefields of our lives

5. For Paul, war wasn't merely an *analogy* or *illustration* – it was a *reality*
  - a. he understood that the Christian is a soldier for the Kingdom of God and Jesus is his or her Captain.
  - b. in 1 Timothy 1:18 he told his young protégé to *wage a good warfare*.
  - c. he calls Archipus & Epaphroditus his *fellow soldiers*. (Philemon 2 and Phil. 2:25)
6. Here in 2 Timothy 2 Paul identifies 2 traits of a good soldier . . .

## II. A GOOD SOLDIER

### A. Endure Hardship – V. 3

#### **3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.**

1. The first trait of a good soldier is that he or she *endures hardship*.
2. Sitting here this morning in this comfortable building we probably all nod our heads and take it as a given – *of course* a soldier has to endure hardship; we can easily see the reasonableness of what Paul says here
  - a. the armed forces are entrusted with a specific task.
  - b. through the threat of force, they're to protect the interests of the nation --
  - c. and it's understood that in pursuing this mission they will endure hardship./
  - d. we don't want our military to be soft and undisciplined --
  - e. we want them to be tough and ready to do battle --
  - f. in fact, we take pride in them when they're the toughest in the world.
  - g. even during peace-time, we understand the need for our soldiers to be tough so when conflict does break out, they're ready./
  - h. that's why they *train* - only the hardship of *training* can make them tough
  - i. so, we all recognize the reasonableness of what Paul says here –
  - j. the *good* soldier is one who *counts hardship* as part of the soldier's life!

- k. but tell me – who is Paul speaking to here?
  - 1) this is written to *Timothy!*
  - 2) He wasn't a Roman soldier – he was a Christian; pastor of the church at Ephesus
  - 3) but the apostle tells him he's called to endure hardship *just as a soldier does*
- 3. To be a Christian means to be a soldier in the Lord's Army.
  - a. we teach that song to our children in S/S -
  - b. maybe we need to sing it in the adult service.

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- 4. Soldiers begin their enlistment in the military with *boot camp*.
  - a. recruits are put through difficult physical and emotional tests and training
  - b. the *softness* of civilian life is driven out and toughness is built in that's meant to save their lives
  - c. war is no game, and boot camp is training to make war and win!
- 5. Imagine a group of raw recruits who never had a chance to go through boot camp.
  - a. they suddenly find themselves transported from their living room couch, with a TV remote in one hand and a can of ice cold soda in the other, to a dark, bloody, muddy foxhole in the middle of a firefight.
  - b. the noise of explosions shakes the ground, bullets are whistling overhead
  - c. they lack training, discipline, and conditioning
  - d. they don't know how to fire their rifle let alone reload it or get on the radio and call for help.
  - e. so they just roll up in a fetal position, stick their thumbs in their mouths and start to whimper.
- 6. In v. 3, Paul takes Timothy by the shoulders, looks into his eyes and says, "Being a Christian means enduring hardship, just like a good soldier counts hardship as part of the program."
- 7. In other words, *we need to develop a war-time mentality.*
- 8. Just as the new recruit to the military goes to boot camp to get a soldier's mindset and then enters into battle knowing it's going to be hard – so you and I as the followers of Christ, need to develop and maintain a mindset that realizes we are locked in a spiritual war and the enemy offers no quarter and never sleeps.
- 9. During WWII, it wasn't just the soldiers who went off to Europe

and the Pacific who endured hardship.

- a. the people at home endured it to –
  - b. albeit on not as great a scale - they still developed a war-time mentality
  - c. in fact, this was called the *home front*
    - 1) widespread rationing was used in order to make sure there were enough raw materials for the war effort
    - 2) many women went to work in the factories, replacing the men who went to off to fight
    - 3) my mother told me that she and her neighbors even saved the fat drippings from cooking and took them to a collection site where they were turned into war materiel
10. Our whole nation developed a *war-time mentality*, one that was willing to *endure hardship* because the stakes were greater than momentary comfort.
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11. We would do well to heed Paul's words' to Timothy – *We too must endure hardship as good soldier's of Jesus Christ*
12. Today we hear a group in the church telling us that the mark of *real faith* is *material abundance* and *physical prosperity*.
- a. luxury has become the sign of success and sensual comfort the mark of godliness
  - b. in this perversion of the truth, trials and hardship are cast as evidences of a *lack* of faith
13. Unfortunately, even many of those who rightly reject the faith-heresy have been subtly influenced by its error and complain bitterly when they experience hardship.
- a. they've come to believe that God *owes* them a trouble-free life
  - b. they somehow have been led to believe that becoming a Christians means signing up for a life of ease
  - c. they've forgotten that Jesus said – “In the world you will have tribulation.”
  - d. they've lost sight of the word that says it is through many tribulations that we enter the kingdom of God.
14. I'm sure many of us here this morning know someone, a fellow Christian, who recently went through something difficult,
- a. maybe a troubled relationship, physical illness, or financial trial
  - b. but instead of enduring – they fell apart.
  - c. instead of trusting in God, they doubted His love and power;

- d. they accused Him of things unworthy of Him.
- 15. If you or someone you know has recently experienced hardship, I want to give you a word of encouragement this morning so that you may endure.
- 16. God has given you a promise – and He is as good as His word
- 17. That promise is found in Romans 8:28 & 29

**28 We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.**

- a. what things work together? *All* things
- b. not just the easy or fun or pleasurable things – All things, including the *hard* things!
- c. and what do they work together for? Our Good!
- d. who is this promise for? Those called according to His purpose.
- e. what that purpose is, is found in v. 29 . . .

**29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.**

- f. that's the good all things are working toward – that's God's good purpose for you and me who are called –
- g. that we would be conformed to the image of Christ
- 18. Now – let me stop right there – it's critical we get this – do you know why it's God's great purpose to conform each and every one of us to the image of His Son?
  - a. because as the Bride of Christ, it's essential that we be *like* Him, that we be *compatible to Him!*
  - b. this is what God the Father is doing in the world – He's preparing a bride for the Son He loves [Ephesians 1 & 5]
  - c. that's what all this is about friends.
- 19. Hardship is one of the things God uses to prepare us to be a *fit bride*
- 20. In Romans 5:3-4 we read . . .

**3 . . . we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;**

**4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.**

21. Let me use an illustration: How many of you, who when it came time to marry, would pick a mate who's lived a life of unhindered luxury and pleasure and never known *any* hardship or difficulty?
  - a. all their life they've had everything handed to them on a silver platter
  - b. consequently, they're a spoiled brat and do little more than complain at the least discomfort.
  - c. who would want to be married to *that* for 40 or 50 years?
  - d. no – we want a mate with some strength, some backbone and courage.
  - e. someone with character and moral fiber that can take a stand.
  - f. we don't want our husband or wife to lie around all day whining and whimpering because it's too hot or too cold or "I doesn't have any clothes to wear."
22. If this is true of our desire and what we feel *we* deserve, how much more of Christ?
23. He deserves a bride with some strength and character – some resolve and courage.
  - a. someone who's really lived and known what it means to be put to the test and passed.
  - b. someone who's even known failure and yet come through into victory.
  - c. Jesus will be united to His Bride for *eternity*; it's only fitting that she be a companion worthy of Him!
24. And so God allows us to experience hardship.
25. That hardship builds character and teaches us to rely and trust in Him.
26. So, the good soldier endures hardship, realizing that ultimately it's part of God's redemptive purpose in our lives.
27. Those we honor as the heroes of the faith almost unanimously are those who have endured extreme hardship . . .
  - a. Abraham & Job faced trials of their faith that were over the top
  - b. Moses fell from the height of power & spent 40 years on the back side of the desert tending sheep
  - c. Paul had a serious medical condition
  - d. Timothy struggled with stomach problems
  - e. Charles Spurgeon suffered with depression so deep at times he



- nearly despaired
- f. George Whitefield lost his only child at 4 months of age.
  - g. Corrie Ten Boom was arrested by the Nazis and confined to a death camp
  - h. Joni Erikson & Ron Heaggy both broke their necks and remain paralyzed from the neck down
28. Despite such challenges and apparent set-backs, all of these have said it was **THROUGH** these things that they became the people God wanted them to be.
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29. Are you a good soldier in this regard – do you endure hardship, or are you a whiner and complainer?
30. I have to confess that all too often I find myself complaining about something petty!
- a. some small inconvenience confronts me and I whine
  - b. I've come to realize that complaining and whining are nothing less than *denials of the love and grace of God*
  - c. when I complain, when I fail to endure hardship, I'm doubting the wisdom, the power, and the love of the Almighty.
31. What would we think of a soldier who in the middle of battle, instead of promptly obeying his commanding officer, stopped and demanded to know all the reasons *why* an order was given?
- a. soldier's are not tasked to know the *why* – theirs is but to do or die!
  - b. most times, in the heat of battle, instant obedience is necessary for survival
  - c. that's part of the training of boot camp – to teach instant obedience
32. Since we at war – spiritual war, we need to develop a mind-set of instant obedience and when hardship comes, take it as part of our good God's good Plan to make us more like Christ.

### ***B. Unentangled***

1. The second trait of a good soldier is found in v. 4 . . .
- 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.**
2. The Good Soldier is *single-minded!*

3. When a Roman joined the army, he took an oath of loyalty to the Emperor that superseded every other obligation.
  - a. he might be a husband or father; he might own a vast estate
  - b. but when he took the Soldier's Oath – a *Soldier* he became!
  - c. the *Code of Theodosius* said – “We forbid men engaged in military service to engage in civilian occupations.” [Barclay]
4. A soldier has to be busy with one thing – *soldiering*, which is what the phrase “engaged in warfare” in v. 4 *literally* means.
  - a. no one “soldiering” gets caught up in *civilian* pursuits.
  - b. he has one task, one objective; wait on his commanding officer.
5. I recall a story about a Civil War soldier who was a watchmaker before the War.
  - a. one day the bugle sounded and the men were told to break camp.
  - b. but he protested - “I can't go now!” he said, “I have a dozen watches to repair!”
6. Just as a soldier stays busy *soldiering*, so the Christian must concentrate on his or her *Christianity*.
7. Does that mean that we have to *neglect* the rest of our responsibilities?
  - a. do we turn our backs on family and friends?
  - b. should we go in to work tomorrow and give notice?
    - 1) “Sorry boss, gotta' go to war for Jesus!”
    - 2) “My church is stormin' the beaches of Maui on Wednesday and I've gotta' be there.”
8. No – being *unentangled* as a Christian doesn't mean forsaking our commitments and responsibilities –
9. But it does mean submerging them all under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Captain of our Salvation.
10. We need to see every relationship as *strategic* for the Kingdom of God.
  - a. our homes are the places Jesus calls us to demonstrate *His* love and truth.
  - b. marriage and parenting are battle-grounds where He must reign as Lord.
  - c. work is yet another battlefield Jesus wants us to be single-minded in.
  - d. whether we're at the mall or in church, the objective is the

- same – to live for His glory and see His Kingdom advance!
11. Just as the Marines planted the flag on top of Mt. Suribachi as the emblem of their victory over the Japanese – the Lord wants us to raise the banner of His victory over every area of our lives.
  12. We sing that song – “Glorify Your Name”
    - a. that’s what it means when it says – “Raise the banner, raise it high – Father Glorify!”
    - b. the banner is the *standard* of the Lord’s Victory!

**No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life**

13. Paul says it this way in 2 Corinthians 10 . . .

**3 Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.**

**4 For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,**

**5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,**

14. In the jungles of Vietnam, our soldiers were careful about where they walked
  - a. the Viet Cong were masters at setting all kinds of traps to maim and kill
  - b. so our soldiers stayed alert to remain clear of anything that might entangle them and take them out of action
15. As you and I walk through the battlefield of this world, we face an enemy who’s a master at setting traps
  - a. he wants to take *us* out of action
  - b. and if he can’t do that, he at least wants to *distract* us so we don’t present any real threat to him
  - c. if he can’t get us to trip over some obvious moral fall – then he’ll present something that looks good, but in fact is just one more entanglement meant to make us ineffective

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. Captive To Christ**

1. Is every thought, every ambition, every relationship in your life captive to Christ this morning?
2. Or are there things that distract you from your devotion and obedience to Jesus?
3. Are you entangled in the affairs of this life –
  - a. does your career cut in to your commitment to Christ?
  - b. does your house hinder your service of the King?
  - c. does your boyfriend or girlfriend or anyone else diminish your passion for the Lord?
4. If so, then break free today.
5. Instead of being entangled in it, make it one more point of victory for the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
6. Set the banner of His love and truth over it.