

Titles of Christians (6)
Good Soldier of Christ Jesus
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

The good soldier of Christ Jesus

Today we are going to study another title of Christians:

^{NASB} **2 Timothy 2:3 – 4** Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. (2Ti 2:3-4 NASB)

Here Apostle Paul says that we are to suffer hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, and we should not entangle ourselves in the affairs of everyday life, so that we may please the one who enlisted us, namely our Lord Christ Jesus.

Last time we studied the title “Ambassadors for Christ”; today we study the title “Good soldiers of Christ Jesus.”

A soldier’s work is the opposite of an ambassador’s work. As a soldier we are to fight the battle for Christ; but as an ambassador, we implore people to reconcile to Yahweh God.

So are we to reconcile or to fight? What kind of battle are we fighting? With whom are we fighting? Now let us find the answers one by one.

The whole world lies in the power of the evil one

^{NASB} **1 John 5:19** We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of the evil one*. (1Jo 5:19 NASB)

Apostle John says that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. Why is that so? It is because everyone in the world has sinned; and when we sin, we become slaves of sin.

^{NASB} **John 8:34** Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” (Joh 8:34 NASB)

Slaves of sin means slaves of Satan; if we are slaves of Satan, we are controlled by Satan, we lie under his power!

When the people of the world don't submit to God's power and authority, they will commit sin and become enemies of God. In the end they will lie under the power of the evil one.

Only those who have committed their lives totally to Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ are free from Satan's control. But most people in the world don't believe in Yahweh God and Jesus Christ, therefore they are controlled by Satan. That's why the Bible says the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

As ambassadors for Christ we implore people to reconcile with Yahweh God, we tell people to repent of their sins. But Satan definitely would not let people go free from his control. He would use many ways to destroy our work, even to harm us physically and spiritually, so we have to fight with him. Therefore we are both ambassadors and soldiers; we go into the enemy territory to implore people to reconcile with God; but at the same time we fight with Satan as good soldiers of Christ.

^{NASB} **Ephesians 6:12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. (Eph 6:12 NASB)

This passage says we are not fighting against flesh and blood, a term which means human beings. We are not fighting against people; on the contrary we are to rescue them from the control of the evil one. Who are we fighting? We are fighting against the powers of Satan in this world and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. In other words we are to fight against Satan and his allies on earth as well as in the heavenly places.

The war against Satan is very real and very dangerous. Let me tell you two true stories. The first story is about Pastor Eric Chang. Pastor Eric has since passed away; he was a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ, he served Yahweh God faithfully through all his life. One time he went to a foreign city to teach a Bible class. Because Pastor Eric was not familiar with that city, the organizer of that Bible class would send a Christian brother to pick him up by car every day. One day Pastor Eric was to teach a very important Bible lesson. When that brother came, they got into the car, but somehow this brother simply couldn't start the car. This kind of thing had never happened to him before. He had just driven the car to Pastor Eric's place, the car had been working fine, but suddenly it just died. This brother was very surprised, but Pastor Eric had experienced similar things before, and he knew right away that it was Satan's sabotage. He advised the brother not to waste time to fix it, for he wouldn't be able to, since this is a spiritual attack, a sabotage from Satan. It would be

better to call the organizer to send someone else to pick them up. At the end this brother had to ask for another car to be sent over to pick them up to go to the school.

The second story is about a baptism. Thirty some years ago Pastor Bentley and I were serving at a church. There was a baptism coming, a middle-aged couple had decided to commit their lives totally to Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ. About one week before the baptism, this couple received news from their home town that the father of one of them was very sick, and the family asked them to go back home right away. The couple told us about this, and they decided to go back home. We knew right away that was the evil one's tactic to try to hinder this couple from getting baptized. We advised them to commit this matter to Yahweh God, and ask Him to take care of their father's health and to destroy Satan's evil scheme. At the same time Pastor Bentley and I also prayed for this couple and their father. Thanks be to Yahweh God, when this couple arrived home, their father had recovered a lot, so they didn't have to stay for long, and they managed to come back to the church to receive baptism.

Through these two stories, we see that the battle against Satan is real and fierce. We all have to be very careful and on high alert, otherwise we will be beaten badly; not only that, even Yahweh God's salvation plan may be affected too.

The full armor of God

To fight the battle, we need weapons. The weapons we use in the battles against Satan are not guns, cannons, war planes etc. It is a spiritual war, and the weapons are spiritual weapons.

^{ESV} **Ephesians 6:13 – 18** 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 firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, (Eph 6:13-18 ESV)

This passage says we are to put on the full armor of God: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and the last one is prayer and supplication. There are 7 items in the armor of God. If the Lord is willing, in the future we will study these 7 items, but today I will just talk about the general meaning of the whole armor.

Please take notice that in the armor of God, only the sword of the Spirit is for attacking the enemy; prayer can be for both defending ourselves and attacking the enemy; but all the other 5 items—the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes for our feet, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation—are all for defending ourselves. That means:

- The battle against the enemy is very dangerous,
- We have to be very careful, and never underestimate the enemy
- We need to pray at all times for everything and for everyone; this is for both defending ourselves and attacking the enemy.

What does Satan do to attack us?

We need to know how Satan attacks us. He will use every way and every means to attack us:

- He will tempt us to sin
- He will try to destroy our faith in Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ
- He will try to harm us physically, even kill us

All these 3 ways of attack are designed to destroy the preaching of the gospel. The most dangerous attack is not killing us, but destroying our faith. If Satan attacks us physically, even if we are sick, or get injured, or even get killed, as long as we remain faithful to Yahweh God to the end, we won't lose our salvation, and the preaching of the gospel won't suffer much. On the contrary, our being attacked might even encourage the brethren to work harder, and their faith might grow even stronger. Indeed that was exactly what happened to Paul when he was put in prison for the sake of the gospel:

^{ESV} **Philippians 1:12 – 14** I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. (Phi 1:12-14 ESV)

Here Apostle Paul says that the whole imperial guard and all the rest knew that he was put in prison for the sake of Christ. And because of his imprisonment, most of the brothers were encouraged and became confident and much more bold to speak the word without fear.

On the other hand, if we commit sin, the name of Yahweh God would be blasphemed, and the preaching of the gospel would be affected. It might even cause the brethren to lose their faith.

Thirty some years ago there were two big scandals in the United States: two very famous Christian preachers committed adultery. When the news leaked out, Christians all over the world were surprised and saddened, whereas the people of the world laughed at the church. The names of God and the Lord Jesus were put to shame. A movie company even made the incident into a movie to make fun of one of the two Christian preachers. The faith of many Christians were affected and even destroyed.

Therefore we all have to put on the full armor of God to protect ourselves. Please take notice that the various items in this armor, such as truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, are all related to our inner spiritual qualities; these have nothing to do with knowledge or intelligence. It is only when we put into practice the teaching of the Lord Jesus every day, that we put on the full armor of God. But if we only study the word of the Lord without putting it into practice, then we have not yet put on the armor of God. If we go into the battle without the armor of God, Satan would defeat us easily, and even the faith of the brethren will be damaged, the work of Yahweh God will be affected, and even His holy name will be put to shame.

The sword of the Spirit – a weapon to defeat the enemy

After we have put on the full armor of God, we pray continually and use the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, to fight Satan.

^{NASB} **2 Corinthians 10:4 – 5** for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, (2Co 10:4-5 NASB)

This passage says that we use our weapons to destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. And the previous passage Ephesians 6:13–18 points out that our weapons are the word of God and prayer. It is by the word of God and prayer that we destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God; then we make them obedient to Christ.

Some people will say, “I am not able to do such great things!” It is true that we are not able to do it by ourselves, yet everything is possible with Yahweh God.

After the Lord Jesus was taken up to heaven, there were only 11 apostles and around 120 disciples still faithful to the Lord Jesus. This small group of disciples were often persecuted by the Roman government and the Jewish authorities, but they were not afraid, they didn't give up, they continued to preach the gospel. Gradually more and more came to believe in Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ; Some among them who held power and authority became Christians. It took only around three hundred some years for Christians to be found everywhere in the Roman Empire. Christians at that time had been persecuted by the Roman government, but they put on the full armor of God. They used the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and prayer to fight the spiritual battle. In just around three hundred some years the most powerful empire in the world at that time surrendered to the Christians and believed in Jesus Christ as Lord. Today the Roman Empire has long gone, but the church of Yahweh God still exists, and the faithful Christians continue to preach the Gospel all over the world. They continue to fight the spiritual battle with the sword of the Spirit and with prayer.

Today there are many theories and schools of thought that fight against the word of God; a lot of people are affected and controlled by these theories. We have to use the sword of the Spirit to defeat these theories. But if we want to use the sword of the Spirit effectively, we certainly need to study and understand the word of God, but more important is that we need to live according to it.

Prayer to protect ourselves and to attack the enemy

Besides the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, we have another powerful weapon, that is prayer. If we want to stand firm in the battle and to defeat the enemy, we have to pray continually.

Christians are soldiers of Christ Jesus. We fight the battle together, and we pray for our brothers and sisters. Satan may harm us physically, he also wants to tempt us to sin and to destroy our faith. Therefore we ask Yahweh God to help us be alert; we ask Him for direction in the things we do; we ask Him to grant us the power to carry out the work, and we also ask Him for wisdom to preach the word etc.

Satan aims to hinder the preaching of the gospel so that people won't be saved. In all these years preaching the gospel, I find that whenever people start showing interest in the gospel, Satan would immediately come in to hinder them. Sometimes Satan would make the people get very sick, or many things would suddenly happen to them such that they couldn't go to study the word of God, or sometimes their business becomes so good that they are too busy to seek the Lord, or sometimes they would face opposition from their own family etc. Therefore when we preach the gospel to

people, we have to pray for them; we ask Yahweh God to open their eyes, to remove the things that hinder them from seeking God, and to protect them from harm.

I often pray for those who have not yet come to believe in Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ, I also ask God to grant me the love, the patience and the wisdom to continue to help them.

Life qualities of a good soldier of Christ

A soldier of Christ has to do very important work. What then are the qualities that a good soldier of Christ need to have?

^{NKJ} **2 Timothy 2:3 – 4** You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 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. (2Ti 2:3–4 NKJ)

According to this passage, a good soldier of Jesus Christ needs to have these two qualities:

- We are willing to endure hardship.
- We don't entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life.

1. Willing to endure hardship

Let me tell you the true story of a sister missionary who went to backward countries to preach the gospel. She would often go into the mountain areas and remote villages. Usually when she went to a village, she would look for a family and ask them to let her stay with them for a few days. One time she went into a remote village in the mountain area. She asked God to lead her to a suitable family to stay in, but no one in that village was willing to let her stay; they were all very cold to her and didn't even want to listen to her. When evening came, she was still unable to find a place to stay. In the end she had to sleep on the road. She simply committed her life to Yahweh God and asked Him to protect her. She put a blanket on the road and lay down on it. Some evil people were planning to rob her of her possessions and kill her during the night. But all through the night no one came to bother her, and she got a very good sleep. The next morning she continued to go from door to door to preach the gospel. Somehow the attitude of people in the village changed completely, they were willing to listen to her, they all said that God was real. Do you know what happened during the night? It turned out that during the night a group of evil people came near to where she was sleeping, and they saw 12 soldiers in full armor standing around her and guarding her while she was sleeping. These evil people didn't dare do anything to her and they fled. When morning came, that sister missionary woke up and the 12 soldiers disappeared! This news spread throughout the village, and everyone was afraid for they knew that Yahweh God was real, that He

had great power and authority! That's why many people in that village repented and became Christians!

Later this sister missionary received a letter from her home church; the letter said that a few months ago during a prayer meeting, the brothers and sisters were led by the Holy Spirit to pray for this sister missionary. There were 12 people in that prayer meeting, and they immediately formed a circle holding hands together to pray for her, asking God to protect her. And it was exactly the same evening that the sister missionary had to sleep on the road in that village!

Through this story we can see what kind of hardship a good soldier of Jesus Christ needs to endure. But at the same time we also see that when we participate in the warfare of saving people, Yahweh God will take care of us, and the Lord Jesus promised that he will be with us till the end of this age.

^{ESV} **Matthew 28:19 – 20** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Mat 28:19-20 ESV)

2. We don't entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life

The second quality of a good soldier is that we don't entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life. I am not saying that we don't work, that we don't study, that we don't take care of our family, that we don't do anything at all. That is not what I mean. We still work, study, take care of our family etc, but we see that the work of a soldier is far more important than any other work, so we don't let the works of daily life hinder the work of a soldier of Christ Jesus. To illustrate this point, let me use the example of the young men in Singapore.

In Singapore, every male citizen who reaches the age of 18 has to serve in the military for two years. After they complete the military service, they can return to civilian life. But every year after that, they have to return to the military to be retrained for a period of time so that they won't forget what they had learned in the military training. Every time when they go back to the military for retraining, whatever companies they are working for have to let them go; no one is allowed to hinder them. The purpose of this military program is to prepare all the male citizens to be ready to fight to protect the country if they are attacked by a foreign country.

We Christians likewise have to prepare ourselves to fight the enemies when they attack, since the whole world lies under the power of the evil one, and we are living in this world. Actually we

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fight against Satan every day and every moment, and we should never let the affairs of this life hinder us in this spiritual warfare.

Do you see the work of preaching the gospel to save people as being more important than all the affairs of this life? For example: Between making money and preaching the gospel to save people, which one is more important to you?

If you don't see the work of saving people as being more important than the works in the world, then certainly you wouldn't want to endure hardship to fight Satan, and you definitely cannot be a good soldier of Christ Jesus. But we are living in this world, and this world is enemy territory, so even if you don't want to fight Satan to save people, Satan will still give you trouble. If you don't have these two qualities, being willing to endure hardship and not entangling yourselves with the affairs of this life, you won't be able to stand when Satan attacks you. You will be tempted to commit sin and cause a lot of harm to yourself.

Conclusion

Now let's sum up everything. Today we studied the title "Good soldier of Christ Jesus." Christians are soldiers of Christ Jesus, and we have to fight the spiritual battle against Satan to rescue people. Therefore we have to put on the full armor of God, and use the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and prayer to defeat the enemies.

A good soldier of Christ needs to have these two qualities: the willingness to endure hardship and not entangling ourselves with the affairs of this life. Are you willing to be trained up to become a good soldier of Jesus Christ?