



## CHAPTER 8: A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST

WHEN the Devil took our Master up into a high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and said unto Him, "All this power will I give Thee and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it, if Thou wilt worship me all shall be thine," it is ordinarily supposed to have been a vain and boastful assertion. And yet, how much there is of the past recorded on the page of history, and how much we see in the present, turn which way we will, to justify the assertion of Satan that he is really and truly in possession of the bodies and souls of men and of the very world they dwell in. Look at the savage nations with their superstitions, and vices, and their bloody wars. Look at the professedly religious nations with their superstitions, and vices, and their bloody wars, all quite as ruinous, or more so, and, any way, more unreasonable and inexcusable, and all alike soul-destroying in the long run, and we have the most striking justification of the assertion, that Satan is really and truly now, as then, in an awfully solemn sense, the God of this world.

Whether to dislodge and drive the usurper out and rescue the whole world from his diabolical grip may, or may not, be in the Divine purpose, we care not now to inquire, but there can be no question that it is of God that those who are on the Lord's side should aim at this great and godlike purpose, and direct and devote all their energies to its accomplishment. But what a formidable task. True. Formidable because it is not one rebel only, although he be so mighty, but because he has incited to rebellion so many millions of other beings, indeed, the whole world is intrenched in dire enmity against God. But though the task be so formidable, thank God, it is possible, for is not even this, the biggest impossibility of which we have any conception, possible to God?

But how? By what means? There is only one way, and that is by fighting. We cannot bow, or notice, or persuade the devil out of this his favourite citadel and stronghold. If polite requests, and eloquent persuasions, and logical arguments addressed to his majesty would have done it, he would have departed long ago. Nay, if indolent or even fervent and believing prayers to the Divine Spirit to drive him out would have



effected this purpose, we should have had our Eden back again a long time ago. But, no, there is only one way—a way, alas! most unpalatable to indolent and selfish humanity; and that is to drive him out by actual persevering, self-sacrificing warfare. There is nothing for it but to fight, and to fight to the death. Who is willing for this?

If, then, there is to be fighting, and such fierce and terrible fighting as will overcome this great enemy, there must of necessity be soldiers, and they must be good soldiers, too; and I propose here briefly to describe what appears to me to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

#### 1. A GOOD SOLDIER IS A GOOD MAN OR A GOOD WOMAN.

In this war both men and women are equally eligible, but whether man or woman goodness is indispensable. In other armies this is not a particular desideratum. The recruiting sergeant does not inquire if the recruit has been converted, if he prays without ceasing, or has a clean heart. Very bad men have, I suppose, been reckoned in the killing armies very good soldiers; but in the Army of Salvation — the Army whose object it is to destroy sin, defeat the devil, and deliver souls from going down to hell — we must have good men. God Almighty wants veterans who have been themselves delivered from the power of the foe, and washed in the blood of the Lamb, and who will follow Him whithersoever He leadeth. This is the only metal out of which God can make spiritual "ironsides," "invincibles," "more than conquerors."

II. A GOOD SOLDIER MAKES WAR HIS BUSINESS. He may do something in other lines of duty: he may be a farrier, a tailor, a shoemaker, a servant, or what not, but after all fighting is his trade. He has chosen it, and made secondary to it all the other businesses, connections, relationships, and pleasures of his life. If he shoes horses, keeps a shop, has a family, or anything else that is lawful or desirable, or comfortable or pleasurable to himself or anyone else, all has to give way to the interests of the war. Any way this is conditional and essential to the making of a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

It was true of Paul and Wesley, and a host of other warriors in their day, and it will be true of every conquering soldier of modern times. In time of war all Israel of old was



one great camp, and every able-bodied man either went to the fight or stood by the staff. The Christian nation must be a nation of warriors.

III. A GOOD SOLDIER UNDERSTANDS HIS BUSINESS. He is intelligent in all that concerns the war, specially all that concerns the part he has to take in it. For instance, he understands the weapons he has to use.

Just so we want soldiers equally skilled in the use of spiritual weapons, who can use the sharp two-edged sword, and pour just at the right time, and at any range, the heavy shot and shell of Divine truth in upon the foe; who can startle and scatter, and kill, and bring to life again with the truth about God and death, and judgment, and heaven and hell, and Calvary, and a host of other themes. We want soldiers who understand the hearts of men, who are acquainted with the devices of Satan and the delusions and excuses and hiding-places of sinners, and who know how to pour in volley after volley of red-hot truth upon rebels, until they run, or yield, or fall at the feet of the conquering Saviour. No wonder there is so little accomplished, seeing that the professed soldiers of Jesus Christ are so deplorably ignorant of the first principles of war – THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO FIGHT.

IV. GOOD SOLDIERS UNDERSTAND HOW TO ACT IN COMBINATION. Nothing strikes a spectator more when witnessing a body of troops go through any military exercises than the precision and uniformity with which they act together. Dear me, they all move as one man, like a machine! is a common exclamation. And that is the thing aimed at, and therein lies the secret of their power as an army. Without it they would be but a mob. As it is, one will can direct the whole, and by this means and no other all can act together for any given end. Just so the soldiers of Jesus Christ must learn to act in combination with their brethren.

Individual effort has been extolled, and that not at all too highly. Let every man learn the art of personal attack and self-defence, and God give all our soldiers wisdom and courage to stand up alone, and to stand to the very death; but after all, in spiritual armies, as a great captain said with respect to killing armies, victory is on the side of the big battalions. True! God can and does deliver by the few as well as by the many, and He greatly prefers the true-hearted few to the double-minded many. But how





much more He prefers to use the true-hearted multitude, we need not wait to argue – it is self-evident – it is supported by the Holy Scriptures, and by ungainsayable facts. Think of the wonderful results that would follow the united, skilful, persistent attacks of a spiritual force, say only a thousand strong, upon any town, howsoever large that town might be. A thousand men and women who alike knew how to plead with God and man, who had faith to pull down holy fire from heaven, and to set on fire the consciences of sinners with the fear of death, and judgment, and damnation, and who could do this just in such a manner, at such times, and in such different places as should be best adapted to arouse and trouble and harass the enemy into submission to their rightful Sovereign. In other words, think what might be accomplished by a thousand saints familiar with the use of the weapons of their warfare, and able to act singly and in combined force against the common enemy. We say think of the results, of the night and day, and week by week, and year by year attacks and bombardments, and surprises, and all other kinds of unsettlements and miseries which such a force would produce upon the enemies of God in that town. Of course the lives of sinners would become unendurable in the presence of such warriors, who were always, both in season and out of season, bringing them face to face with God and the coming consequence of all their ways, and they would be constrained to remove to some other town, to emigrate, even to wish for death, to get away from this harassing warfare, or – and oh, Hallelujah! – the more probable result would be that the rebels in large numbers would submit and be forgiven, and become in turn themselves followers, and soldiers, in the army of the King.

V. A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST IS ALWAYS A FIGHTING MAN. This assertion may sound strange and unnecessary, but it is not so, In ordinary armies there are, beyond a doubt, hosts who don't mean war – the wages, the shining clothes, the idle life, the music, the promenade, with all the pomp and parade of war, and as much more of the same kind as you will; but no fighting, if you please. Fighting means hardship and labour, and hunger, and wounds, and suffering, and life-sorrow and death. So give us, say your pipe-clay and bandbox soldiers, the form and appearance and profession and pay of soldiery, but no fighting, mind – NO FIGHTING. This, however, cannot be, for is not fighting the very essence of and meaning, and bone and marrow of a good soldiery, and you cannot have it without? And is not fighting, the spirit of war, the liking for it; and the habit of it, the very essence of all true



Christian soldiery likewise, and is it not the ungainsayable reason for the most melancholy and undeniable failure of this holy war these last 1,700 years that His warriors have been so much after this professional kind, accustomed, it is true, to any amount of profession and dissertation, but so little actuated and driven by the overcoming spirit of conquest.

What matters it what ELSE SOLDIERS CAN DO IF THEY CANNOT FIGHT? They are hired to fight, paid to fight, reckoned and relied on to fight, and when the hour comes, if they prove not the men for the hour, woe to the nation that has counted on them, and woe to the soldiers too,

Here is a nation with the enemy in possession, entrenching fast for permanent occupation, rifling and ravishing, burning and slaying, inflicting every form of oppression and indignity and wrong; and here is an army of soldiers who have sworn to protect and deliver, and, if there needs be, to die for their country, pleasuring and idling, and buying and selling, and otherwise looking after themselves. What matters it that they mix up some of the drill and talk of war with it all? It is not the drill and talk of war that is wanted, it is war itself; and for want of it, what will the on-looking world and their countrymen and their enemies say? Surely they will cover their drill and their talk and their self-care with loathing, execration, and contempt.

Look at these fourteen hundred millions of our fellow-men, mostly in the arms and power of the foul usurper of hell who has largely his own way with them, making this possible paradise into blackest and most hellish perdition here, and dragging multitudes down to the deeper depths of all possible woe hereafter. What do Jesus and the angels say of this long-standing army of professed soldiers of Jehovah who look on, and sing, and speak, and read, and understand all about the actual condition of things, and are so very contented with the same looking on, and speaking, and reading, and understanding all about the ruin and desolation, and do so little fighting to prevent, and hinder, and deliver? Oh, what can we say of the professed followers of Jesus Christ who don't fight: fight when they are wanted, fight always, fight their way through the darkness and the devils to the salvation of a redeemed world? What can we say? that they are orthodox, learned, theological, ornamental? say anything and everything, but don't call them soldiers, for without excuses and self-consideration of



health, or limb, or life; true soldiers fight, live to fight, love to fight, love the thickest of the fight, and die in the midst of it.

VI. ANOTHER MARK OF A GOOD SOLDIER IS THAT HE ENDURES HARDNESS. I suppose the worst possible form of soldiers would be men who, from their appearance and capacity and antecedents, led their officers to rely upon them for the discharge of difficult and important duties, but who in the hour of difficulty gave way, and so brought about disaster and defeat. And so, on the contrary, I suppose the highest form of soldiers or of servants of God or man of any other name, are those of whom it can be said beforehand: They can suffer, they can die, but they cannot flinch; they will not yield.

One of the most despicable terms in our very expressive language, branding whosoever may be so bitterly unfortunate as to deserve it with a nameless, an infinite contempt, is that of "DESERTER;" that is, one who from considerations of care, or pleasure, or gain, or from cowardly fear of suffering, or death, or any or all other considerations, runs away from comrades in the hour of danger, and leaves the war to take its chance. Such cowardly, self-serving people, bent on taking care of their own skin, are not only thus despised, but if their desertion takes place in the presence of the enemy, their doom is, if caught, to be forthwith shot. Oh, Thou great Commander-in-Chief, if all the mean, cowardly runaways, that for one paltry excuse or another have within our small knowledge forsaken their blessed banner and left Thy poor struggling troops bleeding in the breach, had been doomed to summary punishment, what a doleful hurrying into eternity there would have been! No, He delighteth in mercy. Some have returned and been forgiven, and since done valiantly. Others are walking about the earth, and concerning them and the rewards they have reaped, and the haunting memories of the past, we say nothing, but pass on.

Oh, this Queen of Graces, ENDURING GRACE – the scarcest grace of all. I have met during my short pilgrimage with an abounding of all other kinds of grace, any kind that can be named, and many kinds that are nameless, but of this holding on grace, this staying power, this proper kind of final perseverance, this enduring to the end, I must confess that I have not found it very common! And yet it is the true soldier's grace, carrying in its bosom all other graces, or, rather, carrying forward all other



graces to perfection and paradise. And what is it but the willingness, the capacity to SUFFER, the acceptance of the agony and the crucifixion as the only road for the true soldier to resurrection and to certain and triumphant entry into heaven? For soldiers of Jesus Christ who know not only how to live and how to fight, but how to die, are invincible.

And THE LAST MARK OF A GOOD SOLDIER THAT WE NOTICE IS THAT HE IS VICTORIOUS.