

THE ANATOMY OF A GOOD SOLDIER

Text: II Timothy 2:3, 4

Armistice Day is commemorated every year on 11 November to mark the armistice signed between the Allies of World War I and Germany at Compiègne, France at 5:45 AM for the cessation of hostilities on the Western Front of World War I, which took effect at eleven o'clock in the morning—the "eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" of 1918. The word "armistice" descends from Latin *sistere*, meaning "to come to a stand" or "to cause to stand or stop," combined with *arma*, meaning "weapons." An armistice is literally a cessation of arms. Armistice Day is the name that was given to the holiday celebrated in the United States on November 11 before it was renamed Veterans Day by Congress in 1954. The original name refers to the agreement between the Allied Powers and Germany to end hostilities that constituted World War I, one of the deadliest conflicts in the history of the human race in which over 16 million people died.

Over the years we have chosen this day to celebrate those brave men and women who have served their country in the armed services, not only World War I, but World War II, Korea, Viet Nam, Desert Storm, Battle for Iraq and Afghanistan.

This a good time to also remember, as our text reminds us, that we are called to be soldiers in the Lord's army. One definition of anatomy is "a study of the structure or internal workings of something." We have chosen the word "anatomy," to anchor five points to our message today with these five words: "ABLE, AUTHORITY, ARMED, AGONY, and ANTICIPATION."

1. ABLE

In Numbers 1:2, 3 the Lord told Moses, "Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies." No less than 14 times in Numbers 1 we find the expression, "...all that are able to go forth to war." Every tribe of Israel (other than Levi) were required to send all that were able to fight to be conscripted. Moses was instructed to tell the children of Israel, "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun" (Numbers 14:29, 30).

From this passage of Scripture we observe that God expects His children to be responsible and be accountable. When the question is asked if James and John can sit on either side of Jesus in a place of honor in the kingdom, Jesus responded in Matthew 20:22, "... Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am

baptized with?" James and John answered, "...We are able." As a challenge to all of us, may we be able to say "yes!" to our Lord's every request for whatever service He desires us to render unto Him. Toward the early part of the 20th Century Earl Marlatt, wrote these words based on the reply of the disciples:

"Are ye able," said the Master
To be crucified with me?"
"Yea," the sturdy dreamers answered,
"To the death we follow Thee."
Are ye able? Still the Master
Whispers down eternity,
And heroic spirits answer,
Now as then in Galilee.
Lord, we are able. Our spirits are Thine.
Remold them, make us, like Thee, divine.
Thy guiding radiance above us shall be
A beacon to God, to love, and loyalty."

2. AUTHORITY

The centurion came to Jesus to request that his servant be healed. He asked the Lord to simply speak the word, because he felt unworthy to have the Lord under his roof. And in the process of the request, the officer revealed a great truth about loyalty and strict obedience. Matthew 8:9: "For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

The Apostle Paul does not mince words when he writes in I Corinthians 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? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

When Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery was placed in charge of the Allied Forces in North Africa, he declared to the argumentative soldiers that no longer would his orders be matters of discussion, but rather his orders were to be obeyed. By the same token, the Lord has given us clear orders in His Word such as in John 20:21b: "...as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Also in Luke 18:1: "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." I Peter 1:15: "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." I Thessalonians 5:22: "Abstain from all appearance of evil." II Timothy 2:4, 5: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."

3. ARMED

King David said in Psalm 144:1, "Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." Ephesians 6:10-18 teaches us how the soldier of the Lord is to be equipped.

4. AGONY

In Luke 14:27-31, our Lord emphasizes the importance of counting the cost and the willingness to pay the price.

In all the annals of military history, there have been few more heroic stories more deeply moving than the brave men of the RAF, who flew the British Spitfires against the mighty, demonic onslaught of the German Luftwaffe in the Battle for Britain. The fuel lines lined the small fuselage of this small Spitfire, so that if struck, the pilot had little or no time to eject, and if he survived, often times, he would be horribly maimed for life. Dr. Paul Brand, a leading British surgeon who operated on these young pilots witnessed even more atrocities than the physical wounds as wives and girlfriends would come to the bedside of these bandaged boys and leave their wedding rings on the gurney that held these patriots and leave them. It was of these warriors that Sir Winston Churchill spoke when he said in the wartime speech of August 20, 1940, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

5. ANTICIPATION

We who know Christ look forward to a day that is prophesied in Isaiah 2:4: "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

That day will not come until the Prince of Peace sets up His millennial reign upon this earth. But for those who have accepted Christ, we have a foretaste of that peace now. The heavenly host proclaimed at the time of Christ's birth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). Jesus said in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

-Pastor Pope-