

# The Church Militant

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[ 0 : 00 ] Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD.

! For he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he has become my salvation.

He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation. My Father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war.

The LORD is his name. He has seen the victory that God had wrought as the people of God had crossed the Red Sea. It was a mighty victory as the enemy was slaughtered, and God's people were rescued.

And the church militant is the theme tonight. The church militant. The church of God is an army. A mighty militia.

[ 1 : 16 ] We are God's military. We are God's army. It talks in the Bible about the Lord of hosts. It means the Lord of armies. That is our God. He's a man of war. The Lord is his name.

He's a mighty commander. He's our commander-in-chief, and we're here to get his instructions today. His standing orders. The message from God's headquarters from heaven is in our hands. The word of God. And we are God's military. It's been said the church is neither a country club, not a safe place to retreat from the cares of this life. It is the assembly place where God's army on earth gathers to hear their commander speak, and to answer back the enemies of this present darkness with the powerful weapons of military combat.

The Bible is a textbook of war. Right from Genesis 3, we see where the slithery serpent, that slippery serpent, who was the Lucifer, the enemy, Satan, the devil, our enemy still, appeared. He showed his ugly face, and God condemned him to be like a serpent slithering on the ground, as pictured that God rebuked him. We know that right from creation and the fall, that the enemy has been at work, and he's still at work.

[ 2 : 36 ] From Genesis 3, verse 15, where God says, And I'll put enmity or hatred between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.

Satan is going to bruise his heel, but the Lord is going to bruise his head. He's going to stomp on the enemy. And that's what it means, that Christ has got the ultimate victory.

He's going to stomp on the enemy, the serpent. And it's been evident right from the beginning, right from Genesis 3, that this great battle is being waged on planet earth. And really, it's the midnight hour now.

It's the midnight hour in this great end time battle. It's talking to a brother on the way here, how he's been studying the end times, and how it's exciting to know that world history is just about to be wrapped up, as we know our save is coming, for his second coming to take victory, to take rightful rulership.

And we are to be, meantime, on the attack, against the wickedness that is in high places, against the wiles of Satan, and we're fighting for a high and noble cause. As God's army, you are enlisted in this great end time army of God, the great military that is God's people worldwide, as the church of God is pictured to be like an army that we can be a part of.

[ 3 : 54 ] And it's been said that at one church, there was an entrance to the driveway, and there was a sign that said, enter at your own risk. It was probably for insurance purposes or something, or, you know, that you're here at your own risk.

But really you could picture that in a spiritual way too, that if you come into the church of God, not so much the building, but the army and the assembly of God's people, if you're part of the army, if you're signed up as a soldier of the cross, then there's a risk there, there's a danger there.

You're at the forefront, you're in the battle sites of the enemy. He's got his crosshairs trying to capture you and catch you and trip you and trap you constantly all the time.

And really, when we affiliate with Christ, there's a separation from sin. There's a dedication to God that puts us in the target sites of the enemy. And it's risky and dangerous.

We know one of our folk, Robert, overseas at the moment in Iraq, a dangerous place. He's going to be in a dangerous... That's stepping outside the comfort zone, isn't it?

[ 4 : 59 ] Think of our brother, Robert, as he's over there, and he was saying he was hoping to witness to his family and relatives over there. You know, that's dangerous stuff. Let's pray for Robert and consider him.

And, you know, men, in contrast to that, what kind of risk have you got? You might have someone call you a name or two, but that's about it, isn't it? I mean, you might be threatened with...

The law might try to threaten you, but we know, thankfully, there's still a scarrick of Christian contents of the laws of the land that we're under at this time that you would think that there's some element of freedom of speech to a degree.

There's still a sense where there should be at least some remains of Christian liberty to be able to preach the gospel in the world that we live.

But, meantime, it is getting more and more dangerous. It's a fact. And as the world gets worldlier, as the government gets less godly and less biblical, then we're in the target sites.

[ 5 : 58 ] Brothers and sisters, it's dangerous. Discipleship is dangerous. It's going to cost you something. In Acts 15, 26, it talks of men who have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what it means to be a Christian, to be on the cutting edge, to step over the line, to actually take a stand, as we sung, to stand up for Jesus, to stand, and having done all, to stand, just to stand, and to count your life not worth anything compared to the name of Christ.

that in the context of Acts 15, there was talking about people who have risked getting persecuted and killed for preaching the gospel and for being an out-and-out Christian.

And it's still true today. I know I can testify of that. And many can too, of how, as a Christian, in the world that we live, that people don't like Christians. They don't like the Christian message.

They don't like the Bible. They don't like what Christianity stands for today. You stick out like a sore thumb. You stand out from the crowd. You don't go the same way as the world.

[ 7 : 07 ] You don't think the same. You don't have the same philosophies. And so, it's guaranteed that you're going to face some difficulties. And I know a brother was saying before this meeting how even in life in general, it's a battle, isn't it?

It's a battle. And the Christian life can be a battle. But don't let that put you off. It should make you stronger. It should make you more resolute. It's like a brother was saying to me today too.

Persistence.

Endurance. It's what, it's that when the tough times come, the tough get going, isn't it? It's when you have the rough times of life that you dig in and press on and press harder.

And Jude chapter 1 verse 3, you might want to turn there. In fact, Jude's only one chapter, so really Jude verse 3, if you'd like to turn there, the second to last book before Revelation, where we see just another one verse, just to catch your attention here.

In Jude, the third verse, it says, Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

[ 8 : 23 ] and the context there, it goes on of how there's a deceiving going on, there's an undermining going on, as some are creeping in and trying to cause havoc. And it's still true today where the Church of God is, some have called it as it's been termed as a kind of phrase that some people use for political parties where they're white-handed.

People come in and they murmur and gossip and try to swing and change things and it's white-hanting, tearing apart the foundations and that can happen in the Church of God and I think it does happen and it has happened.

So, the question is for you and me is, are we truly the soldiers of Christ? Are we truly warriors who are making a conquest in this world today?

Is that something that we are today? Or are we just wimps? Are we just pretend warriors? Are we just chocolate soldiers? And when the heat comes and the testing times come, we just fall to pieces and we just wimp along and become weasley, wimpy weaklings.

But people, we should be warriors and we should have the slogan of the armies of our day. No retreat, no surrender, that we actually stand for something that we believe in.

[ 9 : 37 ] And I know I've talked about it in times past, long sermons along this theme. I've got fond memories of a time I was in the army reserves and of the the discipline and the learnings that I had just in that kind of sense just to kind of get a feel for what it was like to be in an army.

And I'm sure those of us that have had those kind of experiences can think back and think how it was a bit a character building time where you learnt to obey, you learnt submission, you learnt to follow orders and you learnt to do something that was important and necessary for your country and likewise too you're part of the army of God, a much greater army, a much more important army and we have got our commander in chief, the Lord Jesus Christ as our saviour and head and we should have that kind of military mindset to a degree and where it says in Jude 1 here to contend it's got the sense to fight for something with great strength, to strenuously defend something and the truth of God is something we want to contend for the faith, we want to contend, we want to fight for it and stand for it.

A preacher, an old time preacher called F.B. Mayer said this along these lines about the local church he said, it's urgently needful that Christian people of our charge should come to understand that they're not a company of invalids to be wheeled about or fed by hand sheltered, nursed and comforted the minister being the head physician and nurse but a garrison in an enemy's country every soul of which should have some post of duty at which he should be prepared to make any sacrifice rather than quitting.

That's the picture of the church we should be a garrison we should be like commandos behind enemy lines taking back territory from the enemy. John MacArthur another preacher said this and this is quite a long quote so I'm going to adlib it a bit but it's essentially what John MacArthur said. He said as Christians we're in war against Satan. We're in war for the purity of the faith and he talks along the lines of these verses here in Jude 1 verse 3 and 4 he says we have to fight to defend the faith and its purity because as Jude points out there are those who have crept in and are trying to destroy the faith as in verse 4 it's a fight and it goes on and on and there are many who still they try to distort the Christian faith they're taking away the essential messages there's a real battle going on for the truth and you're fortunate here today to be in a church that by God's grace and strength is preaching the truth and you know pray for me pray for whoever's preaching that will continue to be steadfast and we won't veer and be distracted or distorted from the truth we want to be solid and straight down the line even if it offend people and so be it if it does and he goes on there should be in every believer a desire to defend it we're in the midst of a battle we must earnestly contend for the faith from day to day and he says the Greek word for contend it talks about an intensity of the battle the root meaning of the Greek word is agon from which we get obviously a word agony and it's to do with struggle trial a place of action in the battle and it originally meant a stadium too it's got a picture of a great big stadium that's the imagine you know as some of us would have walked into a big stadium with lots of people and of the contest of the conquest of the spectacle of the race of the event of the sport of whatever was happening in the place of contest and that's the sense of the [ 13 : 24 ] Christian combat of the Christian contending it's a determination it's a sacrifice it's an endurance event and it goes on here MacArthur says the literal rendering of this verse you could put it like this fight for the once for all delivered to the saints faith once for all delivered to the saints is really in one word and MacArthur said he saw an advert one day for an event a Christian activity and it said it was an interfaith project an interfaith project does that mean there's more than one faith does that that sounds like it doesn't matter what faith you're in as long as you have one but there's only one faith one faith there are different denominations there's different faith but there are are not different faiths it's the faith that was once delivered once for all delivered to the saints so it's not a subjective act of faith there's all kinds of faiths you can have faith in a block of wood and bow down to it or some other you can have faith in a guru who makes you say all kinds of funny things and makes you makes you high and you think wow he's great he gives me a buzz and people think they're Christian preachers and teachers or teachings or spectacles of today too if it makes me feel good it's God must be but no it's not talking about subjective acts of faith but to the content of

Christianity the word of God this is the faith the faith once delivered to the saints it's the body of doctrine that makes up God's revelation and once for all time he goes on when anybody comes along today and says I have something to add to the faith you can say have you read Jude 3 the faith was once for all delivered to the saints you don't have anything new every cult claims to have

new revelation from God but there isn't any new revelation because the body of truth was once for all delivered to the saints the Christian faith is unchangeable every new doctrine and every new revelation is false the faith was once for all delivered to the saints and that settles it the Bible is complete it's a real safeguard for us isn't it when you get these lovely guys knocking at your door with suits and ties on saying there's another gospel another new testament there's another testament of Jesus Christ he came in South America and talked to the red Indians and you know the South American

Indians and brought this new added revelation it's bunkum it was once for all delivered to the saints it's right here in your hands the word of God this is what we can stand and build upon the once for all delivered to the saints faith and the word delivered it's in the aorist tense which signifies an action that happened once in the past so divine spiritual revelation was once for all delivered to the saints so the new truths or the new fatty things that happen from time to time in the church world where someone has a new kind of revelation really it's not of God there are no new doctrines there are no new doctrines there are no new theological trends that God has invented Christianity is historic objective revelation and it's complete the Bible is all we need end quote I had lived a bit there but that's basically what John MacArthur said and it's true the Bible is once for all delivered it's something that we have to contend for and we should do so boldly it talks in

Proverbs 28 the wicked flee when no man pursueth but the righteous are as bold as a lion you should be as bold as a lion and it encourages me when I see men of God who are bold enough to stand up for Christ in hostile territory in enemy territory and to be laughed at and scorned and mocked and publicly humiliated we should be people of God we should be as bold as a lion it shouldn't matter what anybody says that's contrary we stand for the truth and we don't care who gets offended whether they like it or not we're going to deliver it and in Acts 4 the church prayed Lord behold their threatenings and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word you've got something you can be bold about young men older men young women older women you've got someone who's worth dying for who's worth living for and this is a faith worth contending for and living for and Paul said in Philippians 1 17

I'm set for the defence of the gospel he was not ashamed to own his law or to defend his cause and there was a sign where Zwingli preached one of the old time reforms of old and it said on his church there by God's grace do something courageous by God's grace do something courageous maybe for you it could be witnessing to your daughter to your son to your sister your brother your mum your dad your school friends your workmates it could be you can do something courageous this week you might be able to do something you've never done before in being a strong Christian being a testimony to those around you who live with you who see you who you can shop with I know there's folk that you might meet who down the shop you can say a word you can do something do something do something courageous by God's grace and life is a battleground we're talking before the home might be a battleground the battle lines are drawn there's an enemy who's out to get you he wants to get you he wants to get you down he wants to cripple you and frustrate you and make you feel hopeless and like it's too hard but press on press on sister press on brother life is a battleground but the battle is the

[ 19 : 41 ] Lord's it says in the word doesn't it and the battle lines are drawn we're engaged in warfare be ready for action if you face some battles it's to be expected don't let it faze you it's to be expected and in a way it's a good thing because the enemy's worried about you if the enemy's giving you a hard time it means you're getting under his skin otherwise he wouldn't just leave you alone so it's a good thing rejoice and count it all joy and 2 corinthians 10 it says for though we walk in the flesh we do not war after the flesh for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but are mighty through god to pulling down strong holds casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of god and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of christ ask god to put his helmet for salvation amen put his covering over your head over your mind over the ear gate the eye gate help you with your mouth gate alright help you with all of your life with your whole being that it will be surrendered and i had a bible reading this morning about how we had to present our bodies as a living sacrifice holy acceptable unto god which is your reasonable service people today let god have control of your mind not men but god let your mind be fed by the word let it be sheltered and shielded by the word that the word can shield you it's like it's been said sin will keep you from this book but this book will keep you from sin take the book take the message seek his help and he'll help you to win so whose side are you on today it's a question we all need to answer for ourselves the gates of hell shall not prevail against the onslaught of the

church we're meant to be an attacking force an invading force to be active to be a good soldier of jesus christ there's so many scriptures i know really i'm just scratching the surface to these but the question really the first thing that every one of us needs to answer am i a soldier are you even saved are you saved that is the critical thing and i can preach to you till i'm blue in the face and tell you all kinds of helpful and meaningful and encouraging words to inspire and bless you and help you to see that god is someone you can hang on to that christ is someone you can turn to but you need to be enlisted now there's a time that came when they got me to sign that i was going to commit to her majesty service and to be a soldier in the army of australia the army reserves and the question for you are you enlisted in the army of the lord are you enlisted as one who belongs to christ is he your senior commanding officer your commander in chief of your life or are you still the one are you answerable to him is he your savior he deserves to be he gave his all to be he bled and died to be but you must trust him you must see your need of him you must see that life's battles are lost for you without him life is in vain for you without christ because it means it's a one way downward slide into hell at the end of your life that's where it's it'll end up because everybody is going there it's talked about a broad way that leads to destruction and many there being are going that way but for you you can find that narrow way there's a narrow way that leads to life and jesus says i am the

way the truth and the life no man comes to the father but by me he is the one who deserves to be your commander in chief ask him to be submit to his commandership and ask him to be the king the ruler the authority of your life and as the church of god as soldiers together we can encourage one another the gates of hell will not prevail against the church the assembly of god's people we're not on a playground it is a battlefield and people today you're at war every one of you is a christian here you're at war and no matter how fierce the battle fight the good fight paul urges us fight the good fight it's a conflict a war that must be waged it's a battle really that's already won it says in the word that god is our strength he is with us hold on to the victory that he has won you have the victory if these and six it says be strong in the lord and in the power of his might stand fast being a christian it's not a weak thing to do it's a manly thing to do it's a godly thing to do it's the greatest thing that any man or woman can do is to belong to christ and to be a part of his army of the end time army are you armed and prepared to fight talks about the weapons of our warfare we just read they're not carnal they're not human but they're spiritual they're things that the word of god we talked we're not covering it tonight but ephesians 6 have a read of ephesians chapter 6 talks about the armor that we can carry that we can wear and put on the full armor the whole armor and take a place of the battle zone of your life maybe the battle zone for you might be in the home front it might be in the work place in the school life in wherever you go about your every day go with god he is with you here's your strength here's your shield here's your refuge here's your defender and he has won the battle we wrestle not against flesh and blood sometimes we spend all our energy worrying about what people are thinking and what people are doing and people might be bugging us but really they're not our enemy we're not wrestling against human beings as much as some human beings might give us grief from time to time our wrestling is not with them it's against the spiritual forces so pray through learn to intercede learn to pray through learn to hold god's hand in prayer to seek his face to find history to battle through the struggle against the powers of darkness not that we need to be afraid of them but we need to be aware of them and we need to be relying on god's strength to help us through and so the church of god in solomon song of solomon 6 verse 4 it's pictured there the church of god it says that in effect it's saying of the church that it's terrible as an army with banners and i talked in brief this morning about how i saw a little video clip of custer's last stand it's probably not a good example because they all got wiped out but how they're holding the banner they're holding the flag of their country of their nation and the the church of god as pictured in song of solomon 6 4 we're terrible or like it's terrifying it's awe-inspiring as an army with banners and you see i suppose in olden days where there was many armies gathered and all carrying banners around it's quite a sight for when you see a big mass gathering of armies or soldiers carrying flags and banners it's an awe-inspiring sight and that's what we should be we should be awe-inspiring we should be terrible terrifying to the enemy because we've got the banner of the cross so to speak we've got the banner of his salvation haven't we his banner over us his love we've got the joy of salvation with the lord is our stream and he is with us and we we should be a a an awe-inspiring force on our planet and as soldiers too

you're never off duty it's a bit like policemen isn't it they're walking around the shops and they see a crim they don't say oh i've clocked off and they don't worry about it they start chasing the crim don't they and soldiers too you know they can be called up at any time of the day or night they're not really got a standard day have they you know soldiers they they can be called in at any hour at any moment they're on call all the time and really as christians too we're never off duty you're a christian full-time some people got the view well i'm a christian on the sunday i go to church i i show my face and you know i sing a few songs and you know put in a put in an appearance but as a christian it's much more than that it's not just going to church that's just one of the blessings that you have as a christian as a christian you're never off duty you're a full-time christian you're a full-time minister every one of you in the service of the king and think about that make that part of your life and be mobilized for battle every day of the week every moment of every day it's your privilege and responsibility to prepare for war to take the offensive to be strong to tear down the devil's kingdom and the real enemy as i say is the powers of darkness and our mission is to set people free from his clutches and that war it started in genesis 3 goes right through to revelation 20 where at the end time multitudes will see multitudes will cross over to christ's side and every form of evil will be defeated and the end times the trump the lamb is going to be triumphant and the enemies is going to be consigned to the lake of fire the question for every one of us here tonight is are you enlisted are you a member of his army are you a soldier of christ there is a war on so sign up for the army tonight you