

Veteran's Day 2017

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning again, and as we celebrated Veterans Day this weekend, I'm reminded of all those who have served and those who were here, those who were not here in our congregation who have served in the military.

We give a big thank you to everyone who was involved, was there yesterday involved in the parade in Sulphur. We don't have very many veterans parades anymore, and Lake Charles doesn't have one, so we were there helping with Sulphur's parade yesterday and got a chance to see quite a few veterans who were there, then went over to another park and had prayer for the veterans who were there and had a great, great time before we went to see Brother Ken yesterday.

One of the probably most sobering things that I've seen is when I've been in Washington, D.C. and the area there in Virginia, to be in Arlington and to see the rose and the rose of white crosses where the dead are buried who have served our country.

I'm also reminded of those souls in the battlefield of the body of Christ who has served God throughout these past centuries.

And in the Bible, we can read the accounts of those who served God faithfully and died because of their faith and died for their faith and the legacy that they also leave behind.

[1 : 32] And I also look at Hebrews chapter 11 and recall, as the writer of Hebrews recalls, those who have lived the life of faith, who were persecuted, and who died for their faith.

Some were delivered from death and some were delivered through death and went from this life into the life to come and served God faithfully.

And we all one day will face the day when this life on earth will be over and we will be spending time with Father. Father, and the question that we ask is, what is the legacy that we will leave behind? The Apostle Paul, as he was writing to Timothy in the book of 2 Timothy, where we're going to be looking in today, was nearing the end of his ministry.

He was in a Roman prison cell and left instructions behind for a young preacher by the name of Timothy about how to be a good soldier.

[2 : 38] And there are ample examples in Scripture about talking about how the Christian life is a battle and how we war against the flesh and how we are good soldiers or we are to be good soldiers of Christ.

So let's take a few moments this morning over the next few minutes as we remember our veterans, but also think about spiritual veterans. And if we've trusted Christ as our Savior, we're all spiritual veterans.

Let's take a look at 2 Timothy 2, verses 3 and 4, where Paul is telling Timothy, he says, You, therefore, must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

And then he goes on to explain about the life of a soldier. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life. Why is that? So that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

So if you have your notes this morning as we're going through this, we're going to see what a good soldier is. The values and what a good soldier exemplifies in his or her life.

[3 : 55] So the first thing that we see is a good soldier is a follower. A good soldier is a follower. If anyone who has been in the military will tell you, when you first arrive at boot camp, you learn that for those next weeks, you basically have no rights and you have no choices.

You are taught, you are taught literally from day one how to follow, and they undo how to think for yourself. And they give you the tools and they equip you to learn how when you're on the battlefield, when you think, you think in terms of how you were trained.

It's the same thing with many, many other areas as well who are quasi-military organizations. And you learn to be a good follower.

No one can be a good follower or a good soldier of the Lord until they first enlist. And that is when it begins. It's accomplishing.

It's accomplished by. And how do we enlist? By trusting Christ as our Savior. So we no longer are part of a draft military.

[5 : 18] And so everyone who is serving in today's military made the choice to enlist. And we enlist into the body of Christ by trusting Christ as our Savior.

So a good soldier is a follower. Secondly, a good soldier is faithful. A good soldier is faithful. And there are ways that we can see that.

How can we see faithfulness in another person's life? Well, first of all, it can be seen in his or her patience. Patience in his or her patience.

Endures hardships no matter what's thrown at them. It's not a matter of, well, you know what? I don't like what's happening, so I'm just going to call it quits and go home.

They have a special name for that in the military. It's called a deserter. And you can actually be put in prison and you can lose your life.

[6 : 21] That's the punishment all the way leading up to death. And so for the Christian, for those who are following Christ, we see this in our patience.

We see faithfulness in that we patiently endure what comes into our life, whether it's persecution, whether it is difficulties, hardships.

It could be physical. It could be emotional. It could be persecutions. We were talking this morning in Sunday school class. How does the world see whether or not the Holy Spirit's work in our lives?

Well, we see it in our love for one another. We see it in how we respond to adversity. Are we, one, that the moment things get difficult, that we begin crying and running around like a chicken with our head cut off and say, Oh, woe is me.

What in the world is happening? Or do we say, God, you know what's going on. You're in control. And I trust you. I may not like this, but I trust you. So we see faithfulness in our patience.

[7 : 33] Look with me at John chapter 16 and verse number 33, where Jesus says, These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have what?

In Christ we can have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.

So what is our motivation for patience? God's got it covered. He knows what's going to happen next. God's got the itinerary. And it's always going to be right.

And so we may not always be privy to everything that is going to take place next. But God does. And one thing we can rest assured, be assured of is, God has our best interest at heart.

He wants what's best for us. It may be painful, but it's therapeutic. It may be painful, but it's going to bring about what he wants to see in our life. And it will cause us to be better.

[8 : 32] So it can be seen in our patience. But there's another thing, that when we follow Christ, it is going, our faithfulness is going to manifest itself in our priorities.

Same thing in the military. Someone who has been a veteran, someone who has served in the military, while you are serving, while you are active, you have different priorities.

You may say, well, you know what? I want to go home and take care of whatever. So sad. Not our priority. Well, I need to go into, not a priority.

Priority is taking care of your, following your orders. Priority is whatever there is that your orders have seen fit to give you.

So in the body of Christ, when we follow Christ, we ought to, as well, have different priorities.

Because we're a good follower, whose orders are we following?

[9 : 33] Christ. We're following God's orders. So our faithfulness can be seen in our priorities. We seek to please the commander-in-chief. We seek to please the one whom we have to answer to.

So we ask ourselves the questions. What comes first in our life? As a follower of Christ, what takes priority? Is it God?

Is it his people? Is it the things that he's given us? The Great Commission, using our spiritual gifts. If we see another member of the body of Christ hurting, what are we going to do?

Are we going to take care of their needs? And as the Bible tells us, we ought to be looking upon whose needs first? Others' needs. Before our own. Well, that sounds counterintuitive.

Especially for Americans, who are individualistic and concerned about our own comfort. But the Bible tells us we need to be concerned about others.

[10:34] So what keeps us serving God? Our priorities ought to. So a good soldier is a follower. A good soldier is faithful. It can be seen in his or her patience.

It can be seen in his or her priorities. And then thirdly, it can be seen in his or her practice. A good soldier.

Good soldier. Guards the truths of faith. Also determined to do a good job. And refuses to do anything that would bring disgrace and dishonor upon their commander.

When you join the military, I'm told that there's a code of honor. There's a code of conduct.

Especially those who are officers and go to a military academy.

And they're taught certain principles. And so much so, honor that if you break one of the code, you are expected to turn yourself in.

[11:39] Wow. That's a code of honor. That's a code of conduct. And so supposedly, if it works the way it was intended to, as a good soldier, you would do nothing to bring this honor upon the Corps, upon the military, upon your country.

And so that's the way a person who is a veteran conducts themselves. No difference in the body of Christ. As a good follower of Christ, others are to see in our practice that we would do nothing to bring this honor to our commanders.

And so it is with the Christian soldier. Lives our life. Wanting to live our life in a manner that brings honor to the Lord. Because we've been talking about the last few weeks, who is it all about?

It's all about God. Why are we saved? Well, it's to bring God honor and glory. Why do we do what we do? To bring so that God gets the honor. So God gets the glory.

Why do we love one another? So the world looks at us and sees how great God is and how God can bring a diverse group together and care and love each other, which goes against the grain.

[12:56] It's not natural. And so the world says, wow, they have a great God. Because look at how they love one another. So it can be seen in our practice. But a good soldier is also familiar.

There are things that we are familiar with as a follower of Christ. So a good soldier is familiar, first of all, with our commander's voice.

We recognize God's voice. And where do we hear God's voice? Primarily in the Bible. That is where God speaks to us.

That is his commands to us. This is where we receive God's instructions. This is where we receive our marching orders.

It's in his word. And then we also hear his word through the Holy Spirit speaking into our lives.

Sometimes it's that gut feeling. Sometimes it's another follower of Christ who speaks truth into our lives.

[14:00] And so we learn to hear our commander's voice. And how do we do that? By spending time with him. We become familiar by spending time with him.

We do that by spending time in his word. By spending time in prayer. So we become familiar with our commander's voice. It's like a child gets to know their parent's voice.

You can be in a room and someone will say something in a commanding way. And children recognize their parent's voice. It's time for me to begin behaving because dad just spoke.

Or mom just spoke. Well you know what? That's Bobby's mom that spoke. I'm not going to get in trouble. Oh wait a minute. That was mom. I'm going to get in trouble because mom has the authority to do what mom and dad typically do.

And so we learn our commander's voice and we know when God speaks. And when the world speaks or when Satan speaks. We learn that, oh wait a minute. I don't have to listen to him. As a matter of fact, I have to learn not to listen to him.

[15:09] So we become familiar with our commander's voice. We also become familiar with his weapons. What is one of the first things that you do when you join the military?

You are given a weapon. And that you are supposed to sleep with it. Eat with it. You are to familiarize yourself with it.

I think they'll even blindfold you and you have to take that weapon apart. Be able to put it back together blindfolded. Be able to put it back together in the dark. Because why? Because when you are in the heat of battle and something goes wrong, you have to learn how to be able to use your weapons without even thinking about it.

You have to be able to become so familiar with your weapon that it becomes second nature to you. What are our weapons as followers of Christ?

Our faith. Prayer. The assembling of other believers. Those are our weapons.

[16:20] And they are mighty. The Holy Spirit. And we are able to bring thoughts and imaginations. Bring them captive and be able to control them.

And be able to say, I don't have to be a slave to whatever that is. So what are our weapons?

Primarily prayer. We can engage and enlist God's help in a split second by calling out to him.

I think of Daniel. I think of others in scripture that simply breathed out a quick prayer. God, give me the words. I'm sure the apostle Paul. I'm sure the disciples when they were in difficult times, when they stood before a magistrate or stood before an authority.

And they were told to give an account for why they believe what they believe. Or to be able to renounce what they believed. And asking God in that moment, God, give me the strength to stay strong.

Give me the strength to whatever. So be familiar with our weapons. The weapons of faith. We have a shield. We have a sword.

[17:34] We have the preparation of the gospel of peace. We have the helmet of salvation. We have the tool belt that we put on.

All of these things, the Bible says, we have tools at our disposal. Then, sometimes we don't think about this. What is another weapon?

Or excuse me, what's another thing we can become familiar with? Our comrades. Because when you're in the heat of battle, is it important to know who the enemy is? And is it important to know who's on your side?

Of course it is. Because one of the things that I hear when, sometimes when I counsel veterans who have just come back and are enculturating back into society, we have many who get, they're in reserves or they get called up.

They go back to active duty. Then they come back. And then they've got to go back into regular society. One of the things, especially if they've been deployed for a year, 18 months or so, they have become so used to trusting their comrades with their life that I hear quite often, I find it difficult to trust anyone who's not military.

[19:05] Because that's what they were so used to. Because there's a relationship, there's a connection there that we don't understand. The same thing with followers of Christ.

We are to have connections with other believers that the world can't understand. Well, what do you guys have in common? Well, you know what? We trust the same Christ. We belong to the same family. And so we've become familiar with the rest of the body of Christ.

We were talking about that as well in Sunday school this morning, about getting connected to one another. The early church in Acts chapter 2, daily were doing life together.

They were eating together. They were praying together. They were studying God's Word together. They were sharing what they had in common when someone else had a need. And the forsaking of ourselves together is not just on Sunday morning for an hour or so.

It's doing life together. It's, as a matter of fact, comically, someone this morning said, well, you know what? Go to Walmart. Call somebody else and say, you know what? I don't want to go by myself.

[20:08] You want to come to Walmart with me? And most of the time, someone will say, yeah, cool, let's go. And so that's just simply doing life together. It might be going to have lunch together or going to eat or inviting someone else over.

That is the body of Christ coming together, learning one another. And we were talking as well this morning about figuring out ways to where we can be more proactive and more engaged in one another and doing things together.

People that we might see once a week on Sunday morning and say hey to, but that's all we know about them to be able to have reasons to get together throughout the week to get to know one another.

How can we pray for you? How can we know a little bit about your background so we know a little bit more about you? Being familiar with our comrades. And I mentioned this for just a moment, but also a good soldier is familiar with his enemy.

What is one of the things that they have fighter pilots do? They have them learn the silhouettes of every enemy aircraft they might encounter.

[21 : 22] So when you see it silhouetted against a bright sky, well that's this, that's a Russian fighter. That's this. That's this kind of ship.

That's, this is a cutter. That's a, that's a battleship. That's whatever. Know your enemy. Where, and daily I am sure that wherever they are, whether it's Afghanistan, whether it's Iraq, wherever, daily they have briefings of this is what we know about the enemy.

This is where they are. These are their latest tactics. This is what they're doing. This is what they're using. And so a complete familiarity with the enemy will help save, could potentially help save their lives and could potentially help defeat the enemy.

So is it important for a Christian to know the devil's tactics? To know that this sounds like it is something that Satan would do or Satan would say.

This is not something that would come from God. A good soldier is familiar with the tactics of his opposition. Question, does Satan, do you think Satan always wants to have us as bad as we can be?

[22 : 29] As wicked as we can be? You know, sometimes the devil is caricatured as this horned, tailed, red underwear wearing figure that always wants to get us into trouble and make us as bad as he can make us.

Now the Bible says Satan does what very often? He masquerades as an angel of light. And he will take truth, bend it just a little bit, and make us think that we're doing right.

Think of the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul was a Pharisee, one of the most religious men of his day. But what was he doing? He was persecuting Christians, all in the name of serving God.

And so sometimes Satan will not always necessarily get us involved in the most wicked things that he can. Sometimes he will help us to be as moral as we can be, except not following Christ.

And so it could very well be that we are a good person, but we're simply useless for Christ. And he could maybe have us firing blanks because we are not truly serving him.

[23 : 43] So we're familiar with the enemy. The next, a good soldier is a fighter. A good soldier is a fighter.

Now there's no room in today's military for someone who is a pacifist. What's the point? We enlist. We have a military that is to engage in fighting when necessary.

The military is not always fighting, but there are times when, when time is there, we need to be willing to fight. It doesn't retreat in the face of the opposition.

Same thing with a follower of Christ. We don't retreat. We don't make an excuse, or we don't apologize for what's right. Someone will say, well, you know, that's the mother's choice, or this is that, and well, you know, it's not politically correct to do this.

And we say, all I know is, there is right, there is wrong. This is right, that is wrong. So there's nothing wrong with being a fighter when it comes to the sense of, we fight for truth, and we fight for what's right.

[25 : 00] And also, we fight for those who can't fight for themselves because we have some whose voices are not being heard. And whether it's the unborn, whether it's those who are abused, whether it's those who are being sold into slavery today, we have human trafficking here in Lake Charles.

We have human trafficking that crosses the I-10 corridor every single day. And we don't think about it. We say, well, no, that's in larger cities.

And no, it's a problem. And it exists everywhere. We can be a voice for them. And we can be a fighter. And we are, number one, dedicated.

We're dedicated to the one we serve. We're dedicated to Christ. We're dedicated to our Heavenly Father. What does that mean by being dedicated? That means we put Him first.

That means if something else comes along, we're able to say, no, you know what? That's not for me because I am dedicated to Him. A husband and a wife, spouses are dedicated to one another.

[26 : 12] Meaning we have eyes for no one else. We're dedicated to one another. Then, we are determined. determined. We are determined.

What is a good soldier determined to do? Win. A good soldier is determined to do their job, to be the best soldier that they can be, to stay in shape, to stay current with their tactics, to stay up on their training, to be determined to be the best that they can be.

That's not just a slogan. Determined to be the best that they can be. What about a good soldier of Christ? We're determined to be the best follower of Christ we can be.

Not just passive, not just, well, you know what, I'll take it as it comes, but determined to be the best soldier of Christ that we can be.

And then something that we don't always look as a virtue necessarily, but a good soldier is driven. A good soldier is driven.

[27 : 30] How early do good soldiers wake up? Early in the morning. Why? Because they have a lot of work to do. There are things that are expected to be done, so they're driven.

A good soldier is driven to do what they are supposed to be doing. It's not just, oh, well, I guess I've got to do this today. They are driven.

And I've heard accounts and stories of soldiers who were driven to carry out the responsibility and the duty that they were called to carry out.

As a matter of fact, I was watching the History Channel the other evening and it was on the Navy SEALs. And one of the, one of the things that they were, they were called to do in one of, I think it was, I can't remember which exactly, which battle it was or which skirmish it was, but one of them was badly injured and they found themselves in a really, really bad position.

and the SEAL who was injured had a round go through his shoulder, round go through his elbow, a round went through his face, tore half of his face, off, broke his jaw, up to the, I mean, it was a really, really terrible, terrible injuries that he had.

[28 : 55] Well, when he was in the hospital and when he was in rehab, he had posted a note and it was a page long and I wish I had, I wish I had written it down or I wish I had it to read to you this morning.

Basically, it said, all who enter this room should not or must not come in with a negative attitude, must not feel sorry for me because I was injured fighting for, for, against an enemy that, that is against this country.

I received these injuries fighting for a country that I love, fighting for a freedom that, that we deserve and went on and on and on and on about this.

He was driven to serve the country in which he had enlisted into the military. So what he was saying was, don't feel sorry for me and don't come in here if you don't agree with me because I don't need that.

And so he said, only come in with a positive attitude. And he was driven. What a great, great work ethic. What a great motivation. He says that, pretty much, that it was an honor for him to even be injured for his country because of what he was serving.

[30 : 22] He even mentioned something about for all those that were jumping out of the World Trade Center. He was doing it for them. And what an awesome, awesome testimony to being driven.

Then as we wind this down, as Paul writes to Timothy, be strong, verse 1, in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

He says, verse 2, the things that you've heard from me, I commit to you that you may tell many, many others, commit these to the faithful men, endure hardship as a good soldier.

Anyone who competes, he says, this is something that we do for a reason. And so, a good soldier is a finisher. A good soldier is a finisher.

You're given an order. You come back and report, when that mission is accomplished. I know we've had in the news the past few weeks about a deserter.

[31 : 32] And we heard from those who were injured looking for him. And whether you agree or not with the punishment, that's beside the point.

a good soldier is one who sticks with it, one who finishes the job that they're given, because he knows there is a reason he enlisted in the military.

There's a reason why they enlisted in the war, because he knows that he or she will be rewarded, will be rewarded by the commander for a job well done. What about us as followers of Christ? Christ. One day, we will be rewarded by the statement, good job, well done, good and faithful servant.

We have that to look forward to. So finish. What did Paul say about his life when he was nearing the end of his ministry? I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course.

[32 : 41] I have finished the race that was set before me. He crossed the finish line. And there was no detours. There was no stopping and saying, you know what, I quit.

