

## Endure as a Good Soldier

### Endurance and the Feast of Trumpets

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We here in the United States have been enjoying a period of prosperity unprecedented and unequalled in world history that nobody else, as far as we know, has ever enjoyed. I think that one could easily argue as to how good this has been, because there is always a downside to prosperity as well as there being the upside. We all have to agree, by and large, when we think about the history of the world and look at what is happening in other parts of the world, that we have had it pretty good as Americans over the past forty years.

This is of concern to us because most of us have come into the church in the last forty years. Only a few have been in the church for more than that. We have come into the church during this period of very great affluence. And, even though we have had our difficult times economically and sometimes we have had troubles in other areas as well, by and large we would agree that our life has been relatively easy as well. I mean this in the sense that very few of us have been undergoing the kind of life that seems to be apparent from the New Testament epistles. That is, apparently there was a great deal of persecution from time to time that creeps into the writings that the apostles left for us.

This ought to give us some pause to think about how well prepared we are for the hardships that are sure to come. Did you notice? "*Sure to come.*" It is not daydreaming, nor is it just hyping what we are, to say that these things are going to come. Was southern Florida hit by an unprecedented, strong hurricane? Yes, it certainly was! It certainly was one of the strongest hurricanes ever to strike a fairly densely populated place in the United States. And it has just happened less than a month ago, so we have lived with this kind of news.

I would say, from some of the things I have heard on the news, that not everybody endured that very well. There was immediately a great deal of complaints about whether F.E.M.A. was doing their job, whether President Bush was doing his job, whether they got enough money, whether they got enough help quickly enough to alleviate the stress that they were going through. I do not mean to demean in any way the hardships those people were going through. But very quickly there was a shift to blaming somebody else.

That makes me wonder, if something like that would occur to us, are we going to be able to be prepared mentally? Are we going to have the right kind of mindset to be able to endure the hardships that are sure to come?

We might think of hardships in terms of persecution from our neighbors on one extreme. On the other hand, it might be hardships that are going to be coming upon us as a result of some kind of disaster that God allows to come upon this nation because He is softening it up for other troubles that are going to come. Whether it is an earthquake, a tornado, a hurricane, or a drought that continues on and on—there is going to come privation; and there is going to be hardship. Are we going to be prepared mentally for that kind of thing?

Most of us have the tendency to put off things that are difficult. We procrastinate about doing them. I do not say this to our shame. I think it is a natural thing, and I do not think that it is wrong for us to feel that doing something is not going to be all that enjoyable. We also do have to understand a principle that we can surely get out of athletics, or out of business. I think we can also get it out of things that we have participated in and lived through in terms of religion. That is, in almost every case, those who are prepared best are the ones who succeed. Maybe to make the words fit a little bit better—those who are prepared best usually do the best.

I have chosen this theme for this sermon at least partly because it fits into the series on Satan that we have been going through. Also, at the same time, it is like a sub-theme for the Day of Trumpets; and I think the two go together very well. So we are going to begin this sermon back in II Thessalonians 2. I want you to understand, when I begin reading, that you do not have the wrong place. I will be in the same place you are, except I am going to be using the *Phillips* translation. I have chosen this not because it is particularly scripturally accurate (although I have checked as much as I can, and I believe it is). However, I am using it because of the way the man has put the words together. Sometimes the things that he says are awesome. So, listen to this language.

Maybe it would be best to just remember what II Thessalonians 2 is about. It is good to remember that this is the one with the mystery of iniquity, talking about the man of sin; and in the background is their misconception about the return of Jesus Christ. We understand from chapter 3 that what these people had done (at least many of them) is they had quit their jobs! They were going to wait until Christ returned, and they were going to live off the generosity of the brethren in the church. So the letter was written to straighten these people out and help them to understand that they had misinterpreted what Paul said in sermons he had apparently given there.

They took his word that Christ would come "suddenly" to mean immediately. Maybe it was an honest misinterpretation, but that is the scene that lies in the background. Nonetheless, even if they had misinterpreted it, we still have to understand that the apostles (including Paul) were still looking forward to the very soon return of Jesus Christ. Paul castigated these people for their misinterpretation, and he is telling them, in effect, "Get back to work! He is not here yet! Listen to this language, as he tells them:

II Thessalonians 2:15-17 (*Phillips*) "So stand firm [he says] and hold on! Be loyal to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or in our writings. May our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father (who has loved us and given us unending encouragement and unending hope by His grace), inspire you with courage and confidence in every good thing you say or do."

When you read the books of I and II Thessalonians, it does not appear that these people were going through any hard or difficult persecution. Yet things were happening within the church, were not they? He is telling these people, "Hold on!" There must have been pressure coming from somewhere to turn these people away from the truths, the traditions, they had learned

from the apostles.

That causes one to think that, even though their neighbors were not persecuting them, nonetheless there was something going on. These people were in danger of being persuaded to turn away from the things that they had been taught. There was a pressure.

Now, it appears as though the focus of this pressure was something mental. It was something doctrinal. It was something theological. And they were subject to it. So he tells them to "hang on." Those words that *Phillips* used in his translation sound to me like the words of a war! "Hang on! Hold fast," he says. "May God inspire you with courage!"

Why should a Christian need to be courageous when there does not appear to be any persecution going on? That is, the overt kind—where they are being strung up and put to death. "May God inspire you with confidence." That is, confidence that you are going in the right direction.

It is very interesting language, but wait until you hear the next one. We are going to turn to Philippians 1:27. Philippians is a book that was written just a little bit later than I and II Thessalonians. The language here is stronger, you might say, than even what we saw in II Thessalonians.

Philippians 1:27-30 (*Phillips*) But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ. So that whether I [Paul, the same apostle] do come and see you, or merely hear about you from a distance, I may know that you are standing fast in a united spirit, battling with a single mind for the faith of the gospel and not caring two straws for your enemies. The very fact that they are your enemies is plain proof that they are lost to God, while the fact that you have such men as enemies is plain proof that you yourselves are being saved by God. You are given, in this battle, the privilege not merely of believing in Christ but also suffering for His sake. It is now your turn to take part in that battle you once saw me engage in, and which, in point of fact, I am still fighting.

Wow, look at those battle terms: "Stand fast!" "Battling enemies." "Suffering." "Still fighting." That has all the sound of war, does it not?

It is so interesting. Where I read to you in the first line of verse 27, "Whatever happens make sure that your everyday..." That is the way it is translated in the *Phillips* Bible. In the New King James this word "everyday" is translated "conduct." I believe in the King James the word might be "conversation." Do you know what the word is there in Greek? The word in Greek is the same word from which we get the English word "politics."

What is Paul talking about here? This word can also be used in the sense of citizenship. He is drawing here on what he is saying about our responsibility. We are to conduct our everyday life according to what would be expected of a citizen—not a citizen of Philippi though, but a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

You are learning that the standards, the values, of the Kingdom of God are awfully high. You know that, even though there may not be direct persecution in your life, there are times when your attempts to strive to live according to the standards of the Kingdom of God are dealt with in a very harsh way. You cannot get a job because it requires you to work on the Sabbath. You lose your job because you keep the holy days. You might be in an economically depressed situation because you are tithing.

And yet you are duty bound by your commitment to the Kingdom of God—and to God Himself—to live up to those standards. It may require a great deal of courage to do such a thing. It may require a great deal of "standing fast" and "enduring" when you see your economic situation seems to be deteriorating. Even though you are working steadily, every month you are going backwards. You see the tithe going out to the church. Maybe you are also setting aside the second tithe, and that money has an awful allure to it. You could just pull yourself out of debt, maybe, if you could just use that second tithe. There is a form of persecution that comes without anybody directly confronting you.

We are in a battle, are we not? Maybe shots are not being fired back and forth, and nobody is shooting arrows at you. Yet there is *a spiritual warfare* that is going on, and it is happening in your mind because there are pulls within our mind and flesh to disobey the citizenship rules—the duties of the Kingdom of God. That is the kind of thing that Paul is talking about here.

Now, back to the opening. Do you have a mind set where you are willing to endure the privations that may come upon you, the hardships that you may have to endure, simply out of obedience to some standard—some tradition, some value—of the Kingdom of God? It is not causing you to lose your blood or your life. It is not threatening you in that way. Nonetheless, it is a command of God.

We have this enemy—Satan the Devil—who is very willing to put into our mind feelings that we are being oppressed, feelings as though we ought to be full of pity for ourselves. If we allow him, he can begin to move our mind in such a direction that we turn away from our citizenship responsibilities. Then what kind of a witness are we making for God? (Do you see what I am getting at here?)

Using the word that *Phillips* translates into "battling," that word is actually the same word from which we get our English word "athletics"—but Paul turned it into a warfare metaphor. What he is really talking about is something like a wrestling match. He is talking about a race between men to be first, to go across the finishing line. What he is saying here is that we have to battle with all of our strength—to win.

It is easy to give up. Like I said in the opening, it is easy to turn our mind away from doing what is difficult. So it is natural to do that which is less hard; but there are going to be times in our life when, somehow or another, we are going to have to dig in and recognize "There are things playing with my mind to try to get me to give less of my life to God than I should."

II Corinthians 10:1-3 (*Phillips*) I am going to appeal to you personally, by the gentleness and sympathy of Christ Himself. Yes, I, Paul, the one who is "humble enough in our presence, but outspoken

when away from us" [He is quoting them.], am begging you to make it unnecessary for me to be outspoken and stern in your presence. For I am afraid otherwise that I shall have to do some plain speaking to those of you who will persist in reckoning that our activities are on the purely human level.

Now, Paul is talking about himself; but include yourself in this. The point of this sermon is really to help all of us see that we are fighting the same battle that the apostle Paul was writing about.

II Corinthians 10:3-4 (*Phillips*) The truth is that, although we lead normal human lives, the battle we are fighting is on the spiritual level. The very weapons we use are not those of human warfare but powerful in God's warfare for the destruction of the enemy's strongholds.

We all know who the enemy is. But do you realize that you have resources that God has given you that can destroy the attacks of Satan? Now listen to this language. It is beautiful in its descriptiveness.

II Corinthians 10:5-6 (*Phillips*) Our battle is to bring down every deceptive fantasy and every imposing defense that men erect against the true knowledge of God. We even fight to capture every thought until it acknowledges the authority of Christ. Once we are sure of your obedience, we shall not shrink from dealing with those who refuse to obey.

Paul makes it very clear, does he not? We are involved in a war! This does not mean that this warfare is always going to be going on at the same level of intensity. In warfare between nations and states, there are lulls in the battle as one side or the other prepares to make their next push. And so there are short periods, when nations are at war, in which a great number of people die or are injured; and it is usually followed by longer periods of time when the two sides regather their strength, regroup, and get ready for the next attack.

It is going to be much the same way in the warfare in which we are involved. I am here to tell you, "Please, do not let down when it appears as if nothing is happening." That is a very dangerous period of time—the easy times, the good times, the affluent times. We eventually are going to get back to this, and I am going to show you what has happened in the past with the Israelites.

I do not recall the resource where I got the information, but I did read it in somebody's book that most of the time when Israel rebelled in the wilderness it was summertime. The living was easy. The sun was shining. Things seemed to be going well. They were not taking care of themselves—spiritually. And so they became easy victims, prey, of others.

When we are in the Days of Unleavened Bread, very frequently what the ministry does is fall back on a metaphor that we can use for teaching that is certainly appropriate. The metaphor is

that we are pilgrims, and that we are headed toward a very great goal. We need to understand, however, that the pilgrimage made by the children of Israel in those 40 years—much like the pilgrimage we are making now—was not always lived at the same intensity. They went through periods of relative affluence and quiet, when they had enough. But there were other times when God allowed them to go through privation. So we should not expect anything less than what they had to go through.

We also find that there were times when they went through periods of warfare. They were attacked by the Amalekites a number of times, and on the Sabbath. Not only did the Amalekites attack on the Sabbath, but also they attacked the rear end of the line of Israelites. "Out in the boonies" we might say today. They attacked the place that they thought would be Israel's most vulnerable spot. There were other times that the Israelites had to do battle with (or were threatened by) the Moabites, the Ammonites, and others who were a part of the land.

Now, these attackers who involved the Israelites in war also have a symbolic application to you and me—so that we can learn from them and apply the principle to our lives, here and now. God has done this so that we will be able to cope as best as we possibly can.

Ephesians 6:10-12 (*Phillips*) In conclusion, be strong—not in yourselves but in the Lord, in the power of His boundless resource. Put on God's complete armor so that you can successfully resist all the devil's methods of attack. For our fight is not against any physical enemy: it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and the spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil.

Is not that some language? Boy, that is beautiful. So descriptive!

Ephesians 6:13 (*Phillips*) Therefore you must wear the whole armor of God that you may be able to resist evil in its day of power, and that even when you have fought to a standstill you may still stand your ground.

Again, it is very clear that we are fighting a spiritual war against enemies who are far greater in numbers, intelligence, subtlety, and power than Israel had to wage war against in terms of the Amalekites, the Moabites, and so forth. In addition to this, our enemy is invisible.

Paul tells us to "stand." Again, he uses a military term for holding on to a position. What he is saying in effect is that, before one can launch an attack, he must first hold the position he is in. I do not know if you noticed it; but, in addition to that, in the way *Phillips* translated it he used the word "against" four times. And I am sure that he did that in order to stress the determined hostility that there is in our enemy. The Christian soldier is confronting something that, as a soldier, he could not overcome except that he himself has help as well that is invisible and yet can be drawn upon as a resource.

In military strategy, perhaps one of the most basic of all rules is that you never underestimate

your enemy. Our struggle is not merely against human foes; and yet we can find, in other places, that it is a war to the death. In fact, right here in Ephesians 6 (even though it does not say so directly) it is hidden there in the Greek. It is a war to the death—against supernatural forces. The word "powers" denotes one who aspires to world control, and it was used by ancient writers to designate the savior gods of pagan religions. That is who we are fighting against—demons! (It is very clear.)

Our warfare, then, has all the trappings of a literal war, but it is something that you cannot see. It is something that is going on, nonetheless. And the qualities that are needed to fight that war are not something that we inherently have. It is something that we have to be given by God. So our relationship with God is of supreme importance as to whether we are going to have the proper resources to fight this battle. So we have to go to Him to get it; and it is almost as though He is saying that we have to be on good terms before He is going to give us those things.

Now, one of the most valuable of all of these resources is the mindset that we are talking about here. That is, the recognition of the fact that we are involved in a war. That is very important. Again, if we can shift back and consider the metaphor the apostle Paul has used here, there are times when we (as a soldier) are going to face privation. There are going to be times of hardship. There are going to be times of pain—both physical and mental as well. There are going to be times of sorrow that may lead us to depression, or perhaps even bitterness. There are going to be times that we may be physically hungry.

There are always going to be occasions when we can be in fear, and we are going to feel sometimes a great sense of insecurity. There are times that we are going to win our battles; but there are other times when we are going to lose, and we are going to feel guilty and maybe very depressed. There are going to be times of obedience that give a feeling of exhilaration, and a feeling of being in control. There are going to be times of disobedience when just the opposite will be the effect.

And there are going to be times when we will be aware that God is disciplining us—sometimes in terms of a spanking, and other times we will be aware that His discipline is training to prepare us to be a master of what we are doing. There are going to be times of sacrifice, and sometimes there are going to be times of death. But all of these are part and parcel of a soldier's life.

I think that the battle lines are becoming more apparent. So we had better get our mind in gear to understand that it is very likely that this is indeed taking place—when we see the things that are occurring in nature, when we see the things that are taking place in the Church of God, when we see the things which are happening to our own mind. I think that we can say that this time of possible privation is going to approach very rapidly.

I am really just now getting to my "specific purpose statement" here. But I want us to see one major aspect of this concept that I am talking about. That is, some of the qualities that we are going to need to successfully fight this war; and also, if we can, to see how God is equipping us to have them. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. If we are forearmed, we can be much more alert and diligent; and we will very wisely, then, have the endurance and be able to suffer as a good soldier.

II Timothy was the last book that the apostle Paul wrote, and he did it just before he died. It contains a sense of urgency to it that I do not think any of the other books the apostle Paul wrote has. By the fourth chapter it becomes very apparent that he knew he was going to die, and that his death was a short time ahead. Paul was in effect (in the book of II Timothy) passing the mantle on—to his "son" in the faith, Timothy.

He was trying to prepare Timothy's mind for the kind of warfare the apostle Paul had experienced. That is, the kind of warfare that Paul feared (from what we see in the books of I and II Timothy) that possibly Timothy would be of the mindset to shirk the responsibility of. This is because he [Timothy] seemed to be a person of not very great assertiveness, or somebody who would be good at pastoring a flock but maybe not do too well at being an apostle out in front, evangelizing. That is why these things are in the book of II Timothy.

II Timothy 2:1-4 (*Phillips*) So, my son, be strong in the grace that Jesus Christ gives. Everything that you have heard me teach in public you should in turn entrust to reliable men, who will be able to pass it on to others. Put up with your share of hardship as a loyal soldier in Christ's army. Remember: 1. That no soldier on active service gets himself entangled in business, or he will not please his commanding officer.

He shows us there that a soldier's primary responsibility is to please the one who enlisted him in this service. He makes it very clear that our primary responsibility, our loyalty, is to Jesus Christ—not a corporation, not even to an apostle of that corporation. Christ is the one who enlisted us. The man was merely used.

He goes on to say that a soldier must be single-minded. If he is not single-minded, and gets himself involved in things other than carrying out the commands of his master, then that soldier is not going to be trustworthy. He is not going to be willing to endure hardship and put up with his share of suffering. He will not endure if he is deeply entangled in civilian pursuits, or distracted by other concerns.

I mentioned a little bit earlier about examples from the Old Testament, and we are going to go back to Deuteronomy 32. This chapter is the Song of Moses. It is getting near to the end of the book of Deuteronomy, and God is using Moses to make some prophecies. There are things here that had not yet occurred at the time that Moses recorded them, and there is a very interesting prophecy of what Israel would do.

Deuteronomy 32:19-20 (*NKJV*) And when the Lord saw it, He spurned them, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters. And He said: "I will hide My face from them [Israel], I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation."

I read this because I want us to reflect that the history of the Israelitish people is not very bright in regards to their relationship with God. Israel, going through the wilderness, was

accompanied by a continuous course of murmurings—all the way from Egypt to Canaan. And I want to remind you, brethren, that all this murmuring was done by a slave people who were accustomed to hardship and privation.

Now, compare their experience in Egypt with your life in the United States in the past forty years. It has been pretty "cushy," has it not? How prepared are we (in comparison to the Israelites) when somehow or another God takes us out into some kind of a wilderness? It may even right now be beginning to develop as the good old United States is brought down from its pinnacle of great economic wealth. When we begin to go into privation even here "on the home front," I wonder?

Virtually everything in our life has been designed to make life easier—more leisure, more escape. More, more, more of things—and less of work, and carrying out duties and responsibilities. Commitment to duty is something that is becoming very hard for employers to find because there are more and more people with what I call this "welfare mentality" who are always waiting for somebody else to do it. We seem to be teaching our people to be looking for such things as a free ride, which does not exist. Anybody who has not faced up to that is not facing up to reality. God's Word shows "There is no free lunch."

I have, in my possession at home, a book of sermons by John Wesley—the founder of Methodism. In this series of sermons there is something that really struck me, because John Wesley said that wealth has destroyed the godliness of more people than any other thing. You might think, "I am not wealthy." But let me give you John Wesley's definition of wealth. He said a wealthy person was anybody who had food, clothing, a place to sleep, and just a little bit left over each day. Every one of us, brethren, qualifies—according to that definition—as being wealthy. The problem with wealth is that it demands that we manage it. It also demands that we take care of what it is that it provides. If we are not careful, it can be a consuming distraction. And that is what John Wesley was getting at.

I also want to say that it does not have to be that way. This is obvious from the fact that the Bible reports to us that Abraham was very wealthy. He was not just rich. He was very rich. I think all of us would say that David was very rich. These were two great men in the eyes of God. You see the problem is that hardly anybody can use it in the right way. That is, managing it without it becoming a consuming occupation in itself. That is where the problem is. Of and by itself, wealth is a neutral.

Most of us do not have that mindset, which is a defense, because we have been reared in a culture that is wealthy; and [it] keeps prodding us to become wealthier and wealthier and wealthier; and [promotes] that you are nobody unless you possess wealth. So that tends to work against us. It is very difficult for us to control.

So do not get the idea that Ritenbaugh is against wealth, because he is not. But we have to be aware of what the Bible says about it, and that it can be one of the greatest deterrents to spirituality that we could possibly be given. Maybe God is blessing us when he does not prosper us so much, and I want to give you proof of what I just said.

Deuteronomy 32:15 But Jeshurun...

Jeshurun is a code name for Israel. It literally means "the upright one." The word may have been written with a certain measure of sarcasm. It may also have been written not without sarcasm but as a warning to this "upright one"—Jeshurun, or Israel—when he was most likely to fall to the enemy.

Deuteronomy 32:15 But Jeshurun grew fat [prosperous] and kicked; you grew fat, you grew thick, you are obese! Then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

That is pretty clear, is it not? This is a very interesting warning from God of the power of affluence to turn a person away. It is such a subtle form of persecution that we bask in it. I say "persecution" because it does not have to be that way. It depends on our mindset. But we must realize the power that is there. What he is prophesying here is that their lack of character (to handle the affluence) is really what destroyed them.

Now, let us reflect back again on some of the history of the United States (and I am sure Canada's is very similar). There was a different mindset in the United States 100 years ago, or 150 years ago. Our people were on the move. They had goals that they wanted to accomplish. And there was a mass movement of people moving out of the East to the West because there was the promise of land. There was the gold. There was the good things that they wanted out of life. There was land that they could have, and they could put their cattle and sheep on it; and it was reputed to grow great and wonderful crops.

So people were moving out of the cities of the East. It was almost as if it was a kind of metaphor for the kind of mindset that the Israelite had. He had a great goal. Maybe he did not have the best attitude in doing it. But he was going to conquer this land, and he was going to reap the bounty of the good land that God had given to us.

My personal opinion is that this lasted up until World War I. That war had a disastrous affect on the mindset, the personality, of Americans because our doughboys went over there—the singing GI's (singing the songs of George M. Cohen). They were reputed to be happy and to have an upbeat, positive attitude.

However, they were introduced to a culture over there that was not as clean, and pure, and upright as what they had been reared in the United States. They brought that back with them, and the mindset was beginning to change.

We got into the roaring twenties—where people made and lost fortunes practically over night. It was generally a wild time. But it was followed by the Depression. Thus, America's psyche was on a roller coaster ride. Gradually (slowly but surely—subtly) the mindset, the personality, of the American people was beginning to change.

Right on the heels of the privations of the Depression came World War II. However, the Israelitish men—especially from the United States and Canada—this time went out with a different mindset. I think this is really clearly shown by what we might call the icon of the Second World War. Do you know what it was? It was the Willy and Joe cartoon by Bill Mauldin.

What were Willy and Joe? They were cynical, sarcastic, unbelieving, and distrustful. Never again would they believe their leaders in the same way that they did before! Over a period of time that might be vast according to our thinking, the American persona was changing. And when those men came out of the Second World War, never again would they allow anything like that (which was in their power) to occur!

Look what it set off in the Korean War and in the Vietnam War—a people confused, a nation without goals—because now the American persona was one in which we were seeking ease and comfort. We did not want our children to have to go through what we went through.

We would do everything in our power (even if we had to *buy* peace) to get it. We gave billions of dollars away in the Marshall Plan. What nation ever did anything like that? We were buying peace. We were buying security. In a way, we were insuring our own prosperity so that we would have someone over there that would be able to buy our products. They could not buy our products, even if we could produce them, if they did not have any money. So we gave them our money so that they could buy our products. (Maybe that is a cynical way of looking at it, but I think that it has at least biblical undertones to it.)

Brethren, this is what we have been born into. It is something that we have to be very much aware of. And so affluence is not of itself inherently evil, but it has tremendous potential for distraction and making one unwilling to make the sacrifices. Will we faithfully endure with patience? Will we endure with vision? Will we endure with understanding about what is going on? Will we go through these things without complaining? Will we endure these things, in order to reach a great goal and to glorify our God? It is a question for every one of us to think about.

I have a number of quotes here that I want you to sit back and listen to as I read them. You might want to jot them down so that you know where they are. I just want you to see what I feel helps us to understand the application of what it means to be a good soldier.

The first one that I am going to give to you is from "The Reminiscences of Douglas MacArthur", taken from page 424. It is part of a description of what a soldier is and what a soldier has to do—the kind of circumstance that he has to live in, and what is expected of him:

A soldier, above all other men, is required to practice the greatest act of religious training—sacrifice. In battle, and in the face of danger and death, he discloses those divine attributes which his Maker gave when He created man in His own image. No physical courage and no brute instinct can take the place of the divine help which alone is able to sustain him. However horrible the incidents of war may be, the soldier who is called upon to offer and to give his life for his country is the noblest development of mankind.

In another place in the same book, MacArthur says, "A soldier is called sometimes to fight; sometimes to die; but always to suffer."

Suffering is part of the normal business of being a soldier. But, you see, we do not have this concept. It has not been instilled in us as a part of our national character. This is because we

have lost our way. We have no great goals as a nation. We are not trying to accomplish anything. We are not even trying to lead the world in anything anymore—except evil. And I do not know whether we are trying to do that, but we are just doing it because that is the way we are now. It seems to be a fruit of the period of time we have gone through.

From "The United States Fighting Man's Manual," in the introduction on page 2:

An indomitable will to resist is not acquired overnight, nor can it be supplied by military training alone, for it rests on character traits instilled in our homes, our schools, our churches—traits such as self-confidence, self-reliance, self-discipline, self-respect, moral responsibility, and faith in God and country.

This is exactly where our society, our culture, has fallen down. Now it is everybody doing his own thing! And you know what it says in II Timothy 3: 1-5. I do not have to go there. "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come." And the apostle Paul vividly gives us a description of the character and personality of people who are going to be living in the last days. Brethren, this is what we grew up in. It is also what we have to deal with, fight and overcome.

Our parents, or culture, have instilled these things within us—but not purposely. Thus, our mindset is not in the way that it would be in a nation that did not have these characteristics. It would not be this way if we were in a nation that had great national goals that were pure and upright. It has just happened. It is there, and we have to deal with it.

Quoting again from "The Reminiscences of Douglas MacArthur," page 335:

The story of the infantry soldier is an old and honorable one. He carries his home with him, and often his grave. Somehow he has to bring along the whole paraphernalia of fighting as well as domesticated living—the grocery store, the ration dump, the hospital, the medical corps, the garage, the motor pool, the telephone, and the signal service. He must sleep and eat and fight and die on foot, and in all weather—rain or shine, with or without shelter. He is vulnerable day and night. Death has its finger on him for 24 hours—in battle, going toward it, or retreating from it. It is a wonder that the morale of these uniformed gypsies never falters

You can see that a soldier's lot is not always a happy one. Even before he gets into the situation where he is battling, he has to undergo rigorous training—schooling that has hardships built right into it. And the reason those hardships are built right into it is because the training is designed to produce a certain kind of person—one who is rigidly disciplined, and who will obey without restraint.

Why is this necessary? I am going to quote from Churchill, from "The Diaries of Lord Moran",

page 119.

Marshall I [General George Marshall] told me that the problem of this war was the disciplining of the American soldier. Anyway, that has been his task; and it has not been easy—for the American youth is self-confident. He is quite certain that he knows a better way of doing things than those who are ordering him about. Marshall had, at the beginning, to plan a 3-month basic training; the sole purpose of which was to get the recruit to see that he must do what he is told.

As I indicated to you before, that is what God is doing. But our relationship or our unquestioning obedience is to Him, to His Word.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

They found out that the American soldier always thought he knew a better way of doing it. What kind of things had to be done in order to get the soldier to respond in the right way? That is, to change him from a self-confident, freewheeling, independent individual into a cooperating individual who contributes strength and unity to the whole? One who is willing to endure hardship and privation?

This quote is coming from the biography of General Stilwell, written by Barbara Tuchman, entitled "Stilwell and The American Experience in China," taken from page 32. Incidentally, the subject here is hazing.

For the plebes year at West Point in 1900, the description was not inappropriate. Hazing had reached such an extreme at this time that, after the withdrawal and subsequent death of two cadets from causes attributed to hazing, it brought on a Congressional Investigation in February 1901.

Among those required to testify (much against his will) was Douglas Mac Arthur, in the class a year ahead of Stilwell, who had lain on his cot in convulsions after "a session of exercising."

Plebes were made to squat over bayonets; to run naked while buckets of cold water were thrown at them; to be hanged from their thumbs; or to stand in a tub on their heads with water lapping into their noses; to hold a rifle at extended arms for long periods; to be sweated (that is, wrapped in blankets and rain coats in July); to swallow Tabasco sauce; or to eat vast quantities of a food, such as plates full of molasses or 200 prunes; to engage in forced fights; or to eat meals under the table; and to suffer various other humiliations.

The practice was not entirely wanted. Its excuse was that (like the rigid

routines of the official regime) it was said to teach self-control, resistance to panic, and above all the acceptance of authority.

The core of the military profession is discipline, and the essence of discipline is obedience. Since this does not come naturally to men of independent and rational mind, they must train themselves in the habit of obedience on which their lives and fortunes of battle may some day depend. Reasonable orders are easy enough to obey. It is capricious, bureaucratic, or plain idiotic demands that form the habit of discipline.

I want you to reflect: God has never treated you like that. Yet His aim is to produce a people who are tough, who are strong, who are determined, and who are disciplined in terms of their relationship to Him in carrying out the duties that might be imposed upon them by His governance of His family. As you understand, that is not always easy.

And it is good to reflect from time to time on what He has permitted even the most beloved of His servants to go through. Should we be thought of deserving any better treatment when we are involved in the same war that they were involved in? I do not think so. That would not be fair to those who went before us, if God permitted it to be so. In addition to that, it would not accomplish His purpose for us either.

So, even though God has not treated us with disregard (we might say) as these men received in the military, nonetheless we have to have the mindset—we have to expect—that He is going to put us through a fairly rigorous discipline in order to produce, or to create, whatever it is that He wants to do in you and me.

Let us go back to Luke where there is an important principle that has to be a part of the way that you and I operate.

Luke 16:10 He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much;  
and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.

That is the same principle by which the military trains their people. They understand that if they can get the soldier to the mindset where he is willing to submit himself to bureaucratic orders (plain old stupid, silly things that might even be somewhat dangerous) they know that in the battlefield he probably will not crack and run. When the captain, lieutenant, or general says "This way." they will go this way—or "That way." they will go that way; and they will swing as a unit, each man individually operating on his own because the discipline is internal. That is exactly *what God is aiming for*. Sons who independently have His character, and yet will cooperate as a group and respond to the way that He wants His people—His group—to go.

Life is made up of little things, is it not? Life is made up of little things each and every day; and they may not seem very important at the time this "little thing" occurs in the day. But we have to start thinking of it as being but a moment in a much larger picture—something that is going to end in the Kingdom of God.

So when you are faced with a decision where you are going to avoid a sacrifice, or give up on

enduring, or avoid a little bit of suffering because it is going to put you in a measure of discomfort if you obey the Word of God, remember that. What we have done is miss the opportunity to build a little bit more of what we could have had, and what God is going to have to repeat in creating the circumstance to see whether we will do it this time the way He wants. And there is much here in comparing the military and their training with what we are talking about.

General MacArthur (again from "The Reminiscences of Douglas MacArthur") quotes General Phil Sheridan. Sheridan was not all that successful as a general, but what he says here is essentially correct. MacArthur says that Sheridan said that "battles are won on the drill field—not on the battlefield." That may be somewhat of an exaggeration, but I do not think that it is very far off. MacArthur said (again, on page 14 of the same book), "Preparedness is the key to victory."

Do you see yourself as being prepared? Our preparation and the warfare are one and the same thing. They are going on together. This is where God's purpose and plan separates away from the military—because the warfare is the training! (Very interesting!)

What we have to get out of that is a principle that came from Vince Lombardi, the coach of the Green Bay Packers. I picked it up from him, and I am applying this to what we are involved in. He said in a game (a football game) you can never afford, at any time ever, to coast—because success is 75% mental attitude; and mental toughness is character in action. And so he said to go 'all out' on every play, because you never know which one is going to give you the victory.

From "The Fighting Man's Manual" again, except this time from the Code of Conduct, page 3. This is what a soldier had to swear to. However, it is not the same anymore because the code of conduct has been changed. When this Code of Conduct was printed, it was after the Second World War and after the Korean War when I got my hands on this.

If I am captured, I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

What does it take for you to give up—a release of the pressure? Towards the end of Hebrews 11, as Paul was describing these great heroes of faith, he said one of the characteristics of these people who went through tortures and so forth was that they would never accept deliverance. They set their teeth, and they courageously went through whatever it was they had to go through.

I know here that I am setting some pretty high standards; and I am not saying that any of us are going to do this perfectly, because we are not. We have to be realistic. As a preacher, as a servant of God, I cannot afford to give you something that is not true. I cannot cut God's standards down, can I? That would not be fair to you. I think that He is showing us what He expects, what He would love for us to live up to. Always understand that He is willing to pick us up, put us back on the trail again, pat us on the rump, and say, "Let us go through that again, and let us see if we can do it better."

It is a good thing that our Commander-in-Chief is not a general in the old American army. I do

not think that we could expect such kind and merciful and gracious forgiveness, or whatever it is we need to get through.

I am going to be reading again from "The Reminiscences of Douglas MacArthur." This is a quotation from a letter that was sent to a man by the name of Dr. Frim Caram, who was a Philippine government official. I think that he was a governor of a state. Tomas Confessor wrote it to him, and he is castigating this Frim Caram for what he was doing. Somehow or another, MacArthur came into possession of this letter, and he was using it as an illustration of a mindset of the overall majority of the Philippine people during the Second World War. And so Confessor writes:

You may not agree with me; but the truth is that this present war is a blessing in disguise to our people, and that the burden it imposes and the hardships it has brought upon us are a test of our character to determine the sincerity of our convictions and the integrity of our souls.

In other words, this war has placed us in the crucible to assay the metal of our being—for, as a people, we have been living during the last forty years under a regime of justice and liberty regulated only by universally accepted principles of constitutional government.

We have come to enjoy personal privileges and civil liberties without much struggle and without undergoing the pain to attain them. They were a gift from a generous and magnanimous people—the people of the United States of America. Now that Japan is attempting to destroy those liberties, should we not exert any effort to defend them? Should we not be willing to suffer for their defense?

If our people are undergoing hardships now, we are doing it gladly. It is because we are willing to pay the price for those liberties and privileges. You cannot become wealthy by honest means without sweating heavily.

You may have read, I am sure, the story of Lincoln, who firmly held to the conviction that the secession of the Southern states from the Northern was wrong. Consequently, when he became President and the Southern states succeeded, he did not hesitate to use force to compel them to remain in the union.

The immediate result was a civil war that involved the country in the troughs of a terrible armed conflict that, according to reliable historians, produced proportionately more loss of lives, hardship, and misery than World War I.

The sufferings of the people of the South were terrible, but the Union was saved; and America has become thereby one of the strongest and most respected nations on the surface of the earth.

If Lincoln had revised his convictions, and sacrificed them for the sake of peace and tranquility as you did, a fatal catastrophe would have befallen the people of America.

With this lesson of history clearly before us, I prefer to follow Lincoln's example than yours and your fellow puppets. I will not surrender as long as I can stand on my feet. The people may suffer now, and suffer more during the next months; but to use the words of St. Paul the apostle, "The sufferings of the present are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us."

One more thing I want to read here (again from "The Reminiscences of Douglas MacArthur", page 277). What he is doing is quoting a Japanese newspaperman who was among those Japanese citizens (the private citizens of Japan) who was given the privilege of watching the surrender of Japan on the battleship Missouri in September 1945. After witnessing the ceremonies involving the surrender, this man (whose name is Toshikazu Kase) wrote a letter; and somehow or another, this letter came into the possession of Douglas MacArthur. This was the occasion that Douglas MacArthur made the statement "We have had our last chance." So this is what Toshikazu Kase wrote in this letter.

While the destroyers sped home, I wrote down hurriedly the impressions of the surrender ceremony—which Shigemitsu took to the throne immediately after our return to the capitol, as the Emperor was anxiously awaiting for his report. At the end of this report, in which I dwelt at length upon the superb address of the Supreme Commander [MacArthur], I raised a question whether it would have been possible for us [the Japanese] had we been victorious to embrace the vanquished with similar magnanimity? Clearly it would have been different. Indeed, a distance inexpressible by numbers separates us [America from Japan]. After all, we were not beaten on the battlefield by dint of superior arms. We were defeated in the spiritual contest by virtue of a nobler idea. The real issue was moral, beyond all the powers of algebra to compute.

He said the Americans had something going for them that the Japanese did not. We have to ask ourselves whether we have that mindset. Even though we are the weak of the world, we have the great God on our side. He assures us (in Philippians 1:6) that He will carry right on through to the very end with His part. Yet our part may involve suffering, and it comes from the sacrifice necessary to do the right things to overcome Satan.

Now, as we keep this day [of the Feast of Trumpets], we need to keep this mindset in our minds. It is a part of our lives, a part of our daily activity. We have been called to something that is so great and so awesome that its achievement cannot be left to chance. We cannot wait for somebody else to do it. We have to pick up the ball in our own life and run with it—always

being mindful that our Creator is with us in this battle. Each one of us, in some sense, is fighting the same war; and in each one of us there is the knowledge that our circumstance might be a little bit different. But it is all part of the same war.