

# 'Soldiers of the Cross

by Steve Gallagher

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of being willing to obey, sacrifice, and fight for the cause of Christ. It highlights the eternal significance of following Jesus, even when it requires leaving behind worldly comforts and engaging in spiritual warfare. The message challenges believers to be true soldiers of the cross, ready to endure hardships and actively participate in the battle between good and evil.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:21, Matthew 19:21, 1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Timothy 2:3, James 4:1

**Topics:** "Obedience", "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Okay, Matthew 16 21 says, from that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised up on the third day. Okay, so when this is happening here, Jesus is still up in Galilee, but he's about to begin a journey down to Jerusalem, and I like to think of it as his last recruitment drive. He was going to Jerusalem, and he was about to initiate a war that would be set into motion at Calvary, and it would gain momentum through the book of Acts and continue on throughout the church age.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus began this march into war, and ever since that time, millions of people have forsaken their own path, their own will, their own desires, and have fallen in line behind him as he continues his march toward his eternal kingdom. All right, so Matthew tells us this, that Jesus is explaining this to the disciples, and then in verse 24, Jesus says, if anyone wishes to come after me, okay, he's headed somewhere, right? This long journey, if anyone wants to be part of that procession, then something must happen, because Jesus is headed in a direction, but it's the opposite direction of the course of this world, that the ruler of this world, the God of this world is taking people one direction, but Jesus is headed in the diametric opposite direction, and he's marching along, and you know, and if you're in your mind's eye, you can just think of this over two thousand years of him marching down through the centuries and people turning around doing 180s, not 90 degrees, not 17 degrees, 180s, turning around and following him. So he's saying, if you want to do that, here's the requirements, if anyone wishes to

come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me, for whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it, for what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Okay, I'm going to leave it there, because you know, he's really talking about entering into paradise, and he's saying that those who will persevere will have to persevere through the ravages of war.

Okay, so we're actually going to be in Matthew 19. It'll be a few minutes before I get there. So Jesus is on this final recruitment campaign down through Samaria, and really east of Jordan also, and through Judah to Jerusalem, and when I was putting this message together, I was thinking about this, what this must have been like, and I was thinking about, let's put it in the context of modern-day America, and let's say that the brass in the Pentagon decided that they're going to go to war with Iran, and so they have plans that, okay, we're going to begin this war in September, let's say, get past the hot season there in the Middle East, and then we're going to launch this war.

So what do they do? They know that they need to beef up the armed services, and so all of a sudden, you know, you're watching TV, and all of a sudden, there's all these ads coming on for the Marines need a few good men, and the Air Force and Navy, you know, all these armed service ads start showing up in television and wherever. What's that all about? They're trying to enlist men into the army, into their armed services, but they send out those messages to millions of people, right? Millions of people will hear those messages, but only a few thousand are going to respond, and, you know, that's the reality of Jesus' preaching. When he was preaching to multitudes, but he knew that that was not the main primary thing that he was trying to do, because as he preached to the multitudes, he knew there would only be a handful who would truly come and follow him, and that's what he was after, and that's like the army, you know, recruiters, the same thing.

They send out those ads to millions. Many are called, but few are chosen, that kind of deal. So Jesus sees prophetically a war is looming in the spiritual kingdom, the spiritual realm, and he needs some qualified soldiers.

He was looking for soldiers of the cross who would be willing to lay it all on the line and fight courageously for him. He's looking for those who believe in his cause, who see that cause as greater than themselves. He was not looking for those who are in it for their own glory.

He was not looking for those who are unwilling to obey his orders, and he was not looking for cowards who were going to run away when the going got tough. This was a cause that was so great that he was going to lay down his own life, you know, to initiate it, and, you know, the book of Acts is a story of that campaign getting underway. So Jesus is on this recruitment drive, and he has a few specific positions that he wants to fill, and, you know, the wonderful thing about being in the army of the Lord is that you are absolutely guaranteed success.

What an awesome thing. Absolutely guaranteed. If you will just do what you're told to do by your commander, you're going to have all the firepower you need.

You're going to have all the logistical support you need. You only need to be willing to fight, really, and so it's an awesome thing because, you know, whatever you put yourself to, if it's God telling you to do it, you are going to succeed. So he's heading down through Galilee and Samaria, and he starts running into candidates, and the first thing that happens is, you know, all three of the Synoptic Gospels talk about this final journey that Jesus takes, and so you kind of have to piece it all together from those three accounts,

but first he runs into ten lepers, and he's just walking along.

The crowds are following him, and all of a sudden he hears these men crying out for mercy. Jesus, Son of David, please cleanse us. We've got this horrible disease on our bodies.

Can you please cleanse us? And Jesus always hears a sincere cry like that, and he always responds to it, and so he tells them, go to the priests and have them check you out, and as they're going, they all obey him, and as they're going, they're healed, but only one of them understood the deeper implications of what was happening there. Only one. He was a Samaritan, in fact, who turned around and came back and worshiped him and thanked him, and Jesus said, you're just the kind of guy I'm looking for.

Come and follow me, and then he ends up into Jericho, and right as he's approaching the town, there's a blind man off to the side who hears all this commotion going on, and he starts asking people, what's happening? What's going on? Jesus is coming, and he starts yelling out for all he's worth. Jesus, Son of David, please heal me, and people are literally telling him to shut up, but he won't be denied, and he keeps yelling all the louder, all the louder, and Jesus hears that cry and heals him, and he's a perfect example of something Jesus said earlier. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.

This was a perfect example of that kind of determination and absolute desperation that Jesus was looking for, and he said, Bartimaeus, you're just the kind of guy I'm looking for. Follow me, and so he gets into town, into Jericho, and there's just a massive crowd around him, and he notices this smaller sort of guy up in a tree, and he says, Zacchaeus, I'm going to come and eat with you today, and immediately Zacchaeus says, Lord, I'm going to give away half of what I own to the poor. I mean, just an instantaneous response to this Savior, and he says, Zacchaeus, you're just the kind of guy I want.

Come and follow me. Praise the Lord, because Zacchaeus, you know, he was a publican, and he understood that. He was the opposite of a Pharisee who really thought that he was a good person.

Zacchaeus knew what he was like, and Jesus knew that this man is going to follow me with all his heart. It was obvious. So these are only three stories.

Who knows how many encounters there were like that along the way that, you know, for whatever reason weren't recorded. These are three that stood out in the Gospels, and who knows how the Lord used their lives. You know, they continued living for however many years past that moment right there.

That was their eternal moment when they did that 180 and started following Jesus, and who knows how, you know, I had this picture in my mind when we were up here worshiping earlier, or maybe it was in the quiet time of Jesus with this huge crowd following him through the last 2,000 years, and sometimes there would be people who would start following him, but they would bring with them the people they had influenced, the people they had won for Christ, and they would bring their group into the rest of that army. You know, well, I can't think of a good example of that, but just, you know, like one battalion or cavalry or something who comes in and just joins the army and just keeps swelling and swelling as it goes. Such a thought, you know.

How many untold stories are there? Wow, when we get to heaven, you know what kind of a DVD collection you're going to have up there? I mean, you'll be able to sit and watch movies forever, and they'll all be sanctified, and I won't be yelling at you about watching too much TV either. All right, so what I want

to do, though, for this message is I want to focus on a specific recruitment interview that's recorded here in Matthew 19. It's recorded in the other two synoptic Gospels as well, and they all have different details that they include in there, so it doesn't all come out in any one particular account, but let's look here at Matthew 19, verse 16.

It says in Matthews, and someone came to him, I think in Luke it says a ruler came to him, and I can't remember how Mark says it, but they all agreed that he's rich, so we just call him the rich young ruler. That's what we do, right? We do that. Say we do that.

We do that. I'm glad we're in agreement on something. So this rich young ruler comes, and in the Mark's account, he runs up to him and bows at his feet.

Now, think about this, because Israel is a small country, and this guy's rich, okay? He's wealthy. He's probably from that area right there. Everyone knew him, and it would be tantamount to Bill Gates or someone like that running up and, you know, throwing himself, whatever, Franklin Graham's feet or something, not that he's the but, you know, to just show his need and humble himself in the dirt to everyone.

That was quite a thing. It really was quite a thing for him to do that and be willing to do that. So he rushes up to Jesus.

I mean, wow, what a great attitude. I wish you guys had that attitude sometimes. And he says, teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life? Now, you know, we just have this Americanized version of what eternal life is, but let me tell you what eternal life is.

Jesus was the fountainhead of Zoe, of the life of God, of eternal life. It just emanated. He's saying, Jesus, I recognize that you have this powerful energetic force coming off you.

It's just life. It's energizing. It's invigorating.

It makes me want the things of God. It revives me just being in your presence. How can I have that? That's a great question.

And, you know, Jesus, well, he is a master of every situation. It is amazing. He's amazing.

So Jesus starts to interact with him, and you'll notice he doesn't say anything about the three spiritual laws or what is it? I can't remember. He doesn't break into Evangelism Explosion 101. He doesn't say anything about faith or grace.

In fact, what does he talk about? The law. Well, that's messed up, Jesus. You're not supposed to preach like that.

Don't you know the law doesn't have anything to do with us today? Well, anyway, he says, why are you asking me about what is good? There's only one who is good. And what Jesus is getting at here is this guy is looking at Jesus like he's just a nice teacher, you know, and Jesus is coming down to his level in this conversation. He starts down at his level.

He doesn't start off with lofty things. He gets down to where this guy is at, which is a basic understanding of, you know, the Ten Commandments and so on. He says there's only one who is good, but if you wish, that's the word will.

Okay. Will. Your will.

I will to do something. If you will to enter into this life that is emanating off of my being, keep the commandments. Then he said, which ones? And Jesus said, you should not commit murder.

You shall not commit adultery. You should not steal. You shall not bear false witness.

Honor your father and mother, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. And the young man said to him, all these things I have kept, what am I still lacking? Now, it almost feels like he interrupts Jesus right here. You know, it's like when everything was on the outward, like murder and adultery and all these things.

Well, this was a good, moral young man here. He wasn't like us, okay? He was, that was kind of a joke, but you guys, you don't appreciate jokes like that, do you? You might as well come to grips with who you are and what you are. Well, anyway, everything was fine when Jesus was talking about the outward life, but as soon as he starts going into the heart, suddenly the man gets nervous and he just blurts out and interrupts Jesus.

That's the way it kind of strikes me. I've done all these things, he says, you know? Well, anyway, what am I still lacking? What am I still lacking? In other words, he recognizes, it's like he's in a lot of confusion because he, on one side, he's full of self-righteousness. You know, he just really, his whole life, everyone looks up to him.

He's probably a great guy, great businessman, all this stuff. Everyone's looking up to him. He's a good, moral young man, but yet he feels a hole in his heart.

He feels a great lack inside, you know, that void that we all try to fill with different things. He did it with success and with money and wealth and business and so on, and also by getting the accolades of everyone at the local synagogue who put him in the position of being a ruler. He liked that kind of life and all the benefits that came from it.

He's trying to fill that hole with things, but he realized what most people never even come to realize is that they're being driven through life trying to fill a void in their heart that cannot be filled by anything but Jesus. Jesus said to him, if you wish, if it is your will to be complete, and the word complete here, perfection, whatever your translation is, it's referring to an Old Testament concept of following God with an undivided loyalty and a wholeness of heart, of willingness to obey and to submit. If you wish to follow me, if you wish to be complete, if you wish to have eternal life, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow me.

All right, so this man's eternity is hanging in the balance right now. What will he do? What will he do? There it is. I mean, Jesus lays it out.

Riches on earth or riches in heaven. For him, that was the choice, and you know, this isn't something Jesus tells everyone to do, but he saw into this young man's heart something that was going to keep him from God, something that was between him and God, and it was this greed thing. It was this wanting to be in control.

It was this wanting to be well thought of and all of that, but when the young man heard this statement, he didn't argue. He didn't scoff. He didn't whatever, like what the Pharisees would tend to do.

He went away grieving because he knew that he was hearing the truth, but he was unwilling, as Dante called it, the great refusal. What a frightening thing. How many people, how many of us in here, in the past, hopefully not in the future or now, Jesus has come and put his finger on some idol in your heart, and you're saying to him, anything but that, Jesus.

I will follow you. I will give you everything, but don't ask for that thing, whatever it might be. Now, obviously, sexual sin has been a real issue and an idol for all of us guys in here, but that's not the only idol because usually, there's a pile of idols.

When there's one, there's usually others, and usually, it's control of life, being in control, having the right to call the shots in my own life, not having to do what someone else is telling me to do. But anyway, how many have turned away, grieving, not even grieving because they just go into delusion because the great thing about the American church is you can have it however you want it, right? You can have it however you want it. You don't have to obey the Lord, and you get to go to heaven too.

Wow, what a great deal that is, right? All right, so anyway, that's the story here, and like I say, there's much to commend about this young man. I mean, he really came forward with a sincere heart, it seemed like. He was what the church today, evangelists of America today, would just dream to have, a young man who just throws himself at your feet and just tell me what to do to obtain eternal life.

You know, how many people go knocking on doors or preaching in crusades, and they're just hoping to get people to come to the Lord, but here's a guy, I mean, he couldn't be a more perfect candidate for salvation, and of course, you know, Jesus does everything wrong. He could have signed the guy up right on the spot. What's wrong with Jesus? Why didn't you lead him in the sinner's prayer? I'm getting at something here, guys, the difference between Jesus' version of Christianity and the American version, which is all about superficial success, just getting people into our churches, and if you really study the life of Christ, you will find that every time Jesus got into a situation like this, he didn't make it as easy, he didn't smooth the path, he threw obstacles in front of people, he made it difficult for people.

Why? Because he was only interested in soldiers of the cross, and we can delude ourselves into thinking these masses of people in these mega churches and all this stuff are all going to heaven, and everybody's going to live happily ever after, and I'm telling you, it's just a big delusion. There's only a few who find eternal life. Well, anyway, so Jesus is interviewing this guy, and I want to go back over it again, and I think, you know, every time Jesus deals with someone on this level, I think there's he's looking for something.

I don't think I know. He is looking for something when he starts dealing with someone, and so implied in this are three questions, and that's what I want to look at, these three questions. Are you willing to obey? Are you willing to sacrifice? And are you willing to fight? And I think if you study the New Testament, you will agree with me that that is those are the things God is looking for for his people who join his kingdom and his family.

So let's look at those. Number one, are you willing to obey? Now, I can just tell you, if you won't obey the Lord, you're never going to make it. You cannot separate faith in Christ from obedience to Christ.

You can try. You can concoct your own version of the gospel or whatever and just slap the word term grace on it and just, you know, somehow convince yourself that everything's going to be fine, but I'm telling you, you can't have saving faith without obedience to the Lord. It's not possible.

The entire system of God's kingdom is based on an authority structure. You understand that? There is an authority structure. It's hard for us to grasp that in America, because we are so independent-minded.

We're so self-ruled, okay, that works, and we're just that way. I mean, back in those days when there was a king, those people understood what it meant to have a sovereign in your life who had the right to have you killed, whether you liked it or not, whether, you know, the ACLU is out there going to have any marches. You don't have to worry about any of that.

He told you to do something. You did it because your life depended on it, but we don't understand that in a democratic country. You know, it's not very clear to us, but his entire kingdom is built on an authority structure, and Jesus is the commander-in-chief, and you know what? He has the right to tell you what to do.

He has the right to tell you what to do with your life. He has the right to tell you what to do with little things and big things. He has the right to assign you a position in his army, and he has a right to deal with you if you have a lousy attitude.

He has the right to ask you to do whatever is necessary to help win the war that he has launched against the kingdom of darkness. Now, in this case, he brings the rich young ruler to the Ten Commandments, and mainly just focusing on the second half of the Decalogue, but he is basically saying, you know, you're looking at things superficially, and you just look at the outward things, and you are basing your whole life on these outward commandments, but you don't have much concern about what's really going on in your heart. He's trying to get this young man to get beyond the Jewish system that had become so superficial and so, yeah, just a mess.

He's trying to get him to look at his own heart, and look at the heart of Scripture and what God was asking of people. You know, even the rituals of the Old Testament, you know, they don't make sense to us. I mean, I guess they made sense to the Jewish people.

They don't make much sense to me, but you know something? God tells me to go slaughter a cow and do whatever. I'm going to do it. I'm going to obey the Lord, because that's in my heart to be submitted to Him and to obey Him, and they were willing to do the outward things, but they weren't willing to bring their hearts to the Lord, and you know, if this young man had heard the Sermon on the Mount, for instance, he would know that what the Lord is looking at is the heart and the spirit that a person is in when he does those things.

All right, so do not commit murder. You say you haven't committed murder. Well, welcome to the club.

Ninety-nine point nine percent of the world's population can say that. That doesn't mean you're a Christian. Okay, big deal.

You haven't murdered anyone. You've done your whole life. You have never murdered anyone, but what about your heart? You've never had resentment in your heart or bitterness towards someone.

You've never been unforgiving towards someone. You've never called people names, at least in your heart. You've never thought ill of another.

Okay, do not commit adultery, so you haven't committed adultery, but you've never had an impure thought. You've never lusted after someone. Really? Never? You know, Jesus was constantly bringing

people back to the reality of their relationship with God, and that relationship must be built in submission, our submission to Him.

We must obey the Lord. We must obey the Lord, and if you're not obeying Him, you're not in His army. That's all there is to it.

Maybe you were at one time, and I don't know, but if you're not obeying the Lord, you're not in part of His army. That's just the way it is. That's what Scripture tells us.

Okay, number two, are you willing to sacrifice? Where was Jesus headed to? Oh, come on. Someone take a chance. Jerusalem.

Why was He going there? He was headed for the cross, wasn't He? You know, Jesus wasn't like modern-day generals that may sit in the situational room in Washington, and they're putting together the war games and their plans for this war with Iran or whatever, and they're going to just, I'm going to send the third army off to Iran. I'm going to put the fourth army over in Iraq, and our calculations are that we will lose 73,000 men in this campaign, but we have to be willing to pay that price, and they just kind of like in a detached sort of calloused way just send men into death, but Jesus wasn't like that. He wasn't like that, and you know, thinking about this whole thing of war, I was thinking about how many brave deeds have been done in warfare that we never hear anything about for whatever reason, you know.

I mean, we have Medal of Honor and silver medal and so on, but maybe, you know, that was because the men who were saved tell their commander about it, and it goes up the chain, and the guy is finally recognized, but how many of those situations for whatever reason were never reported, but what a great awesome thing in God's army. Every single little thing you do for the Lord is duly noted in heaven's annals. Wow, that's so encouraging.

You know, if you really believed it, it would really change your life, the way you live your life, if you really believed that, that everything I do, you know, I could sit here, and I could pray for my brother sitting next to me, and not only, you know, do I want to help the guy, I want to see the Lord come to him, but the Lord is up there taking note of it, and it's going to be accredited to me, as Jesus says, treasures in heaven. Treasures in heaven are real, and it's not just some halo on your head with a harp. There's a difference in even, I'm talking about true believers who go to heaven.

There is a difference between one talent, five talent, and ten talent Christians, and what they are given, and there's a difference in people's eternal damnation, punishment. Adolf Hitler is not getting the same punishment as some little old lady who kind of just didn't really want to be a Christian, but never did that. You know, there's a difference in punishment, and a difference in rewards, so Jesus is looking for soldiers who are willing to pay the price, who are willing to fight with all their hearts, and no matter what the cost, you know, it's such an awesome thing.

I mean, going to war means the possibility of winning terrific victories for the Lord. Amy Carmichael once said, we have all eternity to celebrate our victories, one for Christ, but just a few short hours to win them. You know that? I mean, what an awesome thing.

Compare your little 70 years, 50 years on this earth, you know, however much time you have left, compare that little tiny little span of time with eternity. You know, what you do now in these short little few years is going to determine what you have eternally, forever and ever and ever. God's calling you men to win great



victories.

Man, there's nothing to stop any of you from being used mightily of the Lord, except your own unwillingness or laziness or lack of faith, lack of believing that I'm, what I'm even saying is true. There's nothing to stop you. God certainly wants to use you.

All he's looking for is a willing heart, someone who's willing to obey and sacrifice and fight. Jesus is looking for soldiers who see that there's something greater than themselves, something greater, something worth dying for. There actually used to be, and it probably still are, I guess, Americans who were so patriotic, they really believed that and lived it.

Soldiers willing to die or put their lives on the line because they love their country. But you know, somehow we've turned it all around in America. Somehow we've gotten it all backwards instead of it being a theocentric religion, it has now become a man-centric religion.

Anthro what? Anthrocentric, is that true, Jim? Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? That's one that comes right out of my Greek grape. Oh, whatever. Can't even say it.

No, American Christians have the idea that they are the ones that are going to do the interviewing. They show up at Jesus's office, just kind of boot him out of his chair. They get in his chair and put Jesus in the other chair, and let me ask you a few questions.

You know, because I'm trying to decide if I want to accept you into my heart. Are you kidding me? That's blasphemous. But we say that as if it's nothing.

Oh, he accepted Jesus into his heart. Really? Accepted the king of the universe, the creator of everything. You accepted him.

How big of you? So we come to this encounter with Jesus with our own list of questions. Hey, Jesus, can I have my 72-inch TV out there on the battlefield? Can we do that? And what about my cell phone and my Sony PlayStation or whatever it is I play these days? And I could have my candy bars and stuff, right? I mean, you know, I mean, Jesus, I've got a lifestyle to maintain here. You know what I mean? The Apostle Paul was probably the greatest field general ever in the kingdom of God, at least in the Christian church, and he said this to his lieutenant Timothy, and I'm going to read it from the Amplified.

This is 2 Timothy 2, 3, and 4. Take with me your share of the hardships and suffering which you are called to endure as a good first-class soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier when in service gets entangled in the enterprises of civilian life. His aim is to satisfy and please the one who enlisted him.

Let me read it in another translation. This is Believer's Bible. Be ready to do without the comforts of life as one of the army of Christ Jesus.

A fighting man when he is with the army keeps himself free from the business of this life so that he may be pleasing to him who has taken him into his army. You know, I just want to say something about this because this is a big deal in America. Jesus loves to bless his soldiers.

He really does, and I've, man, I probably haven't done it lately, but I have many times from this pulpit, went on and on and on about the many things, ways God has blessed me and Kathy, but he has a time and a place for that, and typically, in fact, I think always he may throw out a few blessings in the early stages just

to get people, you know, to know that he loves them, excuse me, but he's looking for us to show a willingness to throw ourselves into his cause. He's looking for soldiers who are willing to sacrifice something, and you'll notice when you start pursuing the Lord, following after him on that long campaign, you just, that's where your mind is. You're not thinking about all the stuff, the worldly stuff, and all that stuff.

You will notice that God's blessings will start catching up to you, and he'll just start popping them into your life, and they will be completely unexpected, and let me tell you something else. You will enjoy them. You will really enjoy when God blesses you, and I'm telling you, there is a major difference because in America, we don't need God.

We can just bless ourselves, but when you are blessing yourself, trying to scratch some lustful itch by buying this or buying that or whatever, it's hollow. It's shallow. It's empty.

You don't really enjoy it. You enjoy it for 10 minutes, and you're already off on to something else, lusting for the next thing. That's the way that kind of life is, but when you are in pursuit of the Lord, he knows how to put blessings in your life that are meaningful and that you really do enjoy.

Such an awesome thing when you have a cause that's greater than yourself. All right, number three. Are you willing to fight? I've always been a fighter.

I just have. I was never a good fighter. Don't misunderstand me.

I got my clock clean more than once, but I was always a fighter. You know, I'm just a difficult person. My wife will say, a hearty amen, and I've lost many battles with her, I can tell you that.

Paul spoke of fighting the good fight, 1 Timothy 1 and 6. Waging war, Romans 7. Weapons of our warfare, 2 Corinthians 10. Our struggle, Ephesians 6. And being a soldier in active service, 2 Timothy 2. Peter said we should abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul, 1 Peter 2. And James stated that it is your pleasures that wage war in your members, James 4. We live behind enemy lines, and Jesus wants to know if you're willing to fight. You know, it may seem ridiculous, but there's some people that joined the armed services.

How many people were in the service? Okay, what I'm going to say, you will know what I'm talking about. I wasn't in the service, but I was a cop, and it's the same deal. There's people who want the benefit package, but when it comes right down to it, they don't want to fight, right? You guys that were in the service, act like you agree with me.

I was always getting in fights in the L.A. County jail. Yeah, I shouldn't have, but I was just that kind of guy because I was trying to be a good cop, and to me, being a good cop meant being aggressive and confronting crime or wrongful things when I came across it, you know, and stuff. So I was always getting into confrontations with people, and L.A. County jail is a good place to get in confrontations if you like that kind of thing.

You should try it sometime. But there were other deputies that they were kind of like that. When stuff started happening, they were at the other end of the jail somehow, right, T.J.? I'm not saying you were.

I know you weren't. I wouldn't even think that. You would have been right alongside me if we would have been working in the same place.

What am I talking about? Yeah, you know, if you're going to be in the army of the Lord, you've got to be willing to fight. It's no place for wimps. It's no place for cowards.

It's no place for softies, and I'm not talking about just men. You women back there, are you fighters? Are you going to fight for your marriage? Amen. At least one of them is.

The battlefield is no place for the passive who just go along with the flow. It's no place for cowards who won't fight, and it's no place for traitors in league with the enemy. It's an amazing thing that happens when someone enlists in Jesus' army with the right spirit.

Suddenly his eyes are open to the war that he's in. He sees the battle lines between right and wrong, light and darkness, evil and righteousness. Suddenly the cause becomes greater than his own little, tiny little realm of self and all his little things that he wants for himself in life.

He gets himself involved in a greater cause. Man, God's calling you to a greater cause than yourselves. Man, join the army.

His attitude changes from a life of, you know, the civilian who only thinks in terms of what he wants to a soldier mentality. I'm going to read this quote from A.W. Tozer. I'm about to wrap up.

In the early days when Christianity exercised a dominant influence over American thinking, this was probably in the 50s when he wrote this, would be my guess. Men conceived the world to be a battleground. Our fathers believed in sin and the devil and hell as constituting one force, and they believed in God and righteousness and heaven as the other.

These were opposed to each other in their very nature forever in deep, grave, irreconcilable hostility. Man, so our fathers held, had to choose sides. He could not be neutral.

For him, it must be life or death, heaven or hell. And if he chose to come out on God's side, he could expect open war with God's enemies. The fight would be real and deadly and would last as long as life continued here below.

Men look forward to heaven as a return from the wars, a laying down of the sword to enjoy in peace the home prepared for them. That's what you're signing up for, and you can't have it any other way. I'm sorry.

You can tell yourself that, and you can paint your own picture, contrive your own gospel, but I'm talking about what the Bible says, not what the American church is now largely conveying and promoting. There has been a tremendous shift over the years from theocentric to man-centric. We have gotten it all backwards, and we're convincing ourselves, because everyone else thinks this way, therefore it must be right.

But it's not right. There's got to be a fight in you, a willingness to obey the Lord, a willingness to sacrifice. You know, sacrifice in the sense of when God and His kingdom mean everything to you, then it's not a big deal to have to let go of some things.

It's not a big deal. It's not like you're getting your heart ripped out or something if you can't watch television, or if you have to give money to a cause, or if you even give your life away to, you know, in some ministry situation. You gladly do it because you're motivated inside by the Lord who lives inside you.

That's the difference between someone who truly comes into the kingdom and someone who doesn't, and the Lord wants to know if you're willing to fight in His cause. You know, after this exchange happened, Peter said to the Lord, behold, we've left everything and followed you. What then will be there for us? And Jesus said, truly I say to you that those who have followed me in the regeneration, excuse me, when the Son of Man will sit on the glorious throne, you also shall sit upon 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel, and everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for my name's sake will receive many times as much and will inherit that eternal life that was emanating from His being.

Such a tremendous exchange. Worth, worth, worth, worth every bit of it. I want to just close with the passage out of my book, *The Time of Your Lives in Light of Eternity*.

Surely one of the aspects of heaven will be rest from all our toil, as well as peace from all of our struggles. We will be like soldiers returning home after years of warfare, who can finally lay down their arms and spend the rest of their lives living in tranquility. So it will be with every weary soldier going home after the long years of warfare.

They won't return to a ticker tape parade in New York City, the joy of which is sure to diminish within days. No, theirs will be a hero's welcome that will be burned into their memory forever. Quote, things no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no human heart conceived the welcome God has prepared for those who love Him.

Charles Spurgeon offers the following picture of that great moment. The Christian's battlefield is here, but the triumphal procession is above. This is the land of the garment rolled in blood and out of the dust of the fight.

That is the land of the white robe and of the shout of conquest. Oh, what a thrill of joy shall be felt by all the blessed when their conquest shall be complete in heaven, when Satan shall be dragged captive at the chariot wheels of Christ, when the great shout of universal victory shall rise from the hearts of all the redeemed. What a moment of pleasure shall that be.

Man, make sure you're on the right side of that. Make sure you are part of that great celebration and that part of it not just being able to celebrate there, but actually one of the participants who made it happen. Make sure you're in the right place.

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