



July 28, 2023

Military Heroes in the Bible and Our Spiritual Battle

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Just a few weeks ago, on Monday May 29 was Memorial Day, also called Decoration Day, a patriotic holiday here in the United States. It is a day to honor Americans who gave their lives for their country. Originally, Memorial Day honored military personnel who died in the Civil War (1861-1865). The holiday now also honors those who died in any war while serving the United States. In 1966, the U.S. government proclaimed Waterloo, New York, the birthplace of the holiday. The people of Waterloo first observed Memorial Day on May 5, 1866, to honor soldiers killed in the American Civil War.

Most of us have relatives who served in various branches of the military and armed services. I have a number of them, and am aware of some who lost their lives while serving. They served their country in exposing themselves to danger while fighting “the enemy”.

My biological grandfather, family, and relatives had to flee to the United States during the *Russian Civil War* (November 1917 – October 1922) a multi-party war in the former Russian Empire immediately after the Russian Revolutions of 1917, as many factions vied to determine Russia's political future. Their stories are not pretty, and I’m grateful for being born here in the United States. They would talk of heroic occurrences as family members become involved in the White and Red Russian skirmishes that spilled into neighboring countries where they lived.

What’s interesting, is that there are several “military heroes” mentioned in the Scriptures. I call them heroes because they fought against an enemy for the good

of others in spite of exposing themselves to danger. The first one I'll look at is Abraham.

His status as a military hero may not readily come to mind. Let's go to Genesis 14. Amraphel king of Shinar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam and other kings invaded the king of Sodom and other kings and cities in the Valley of Siddim on the shore of what became the Dead Sea. The kings of the Valley of Siddim rebelled and Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him attacked a number of kings in the area including the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. The kings and their armies fled. The armies from the East took plunder from the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and also captured Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods.

One of the men from Sodom escaped and traveled to inform Abram of what had happened to Lot.

Let's read the account. *"Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people."* (Genesis 14:14-16)

Abram probably faced a much larger force but he was a good strategist and was able to be victorious. It was likely not his "first rodeo" He also looked to the LORD to bless him and be with him. Melchizedek told Abram, *"And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."* (v.20)

Another incident involved some courageous fighting men from the Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh. Moses called them *"men of valor."* (Deuteronomy 3:18)

The men said they would be willing cross over and fight with the rest of the Israelites and would *"not return to our homes until every one of the children of Israel has received his inheritance."* (Numbers 32:18) *"We will cross over armed*

before the LORD into the land of Canaan, but the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us on this side of the Jordan." (v.32)

Moses said if they would do this they could inherit the land on the Eastern side of the River. The valiant men willingly crossed over to assist the other tribes in claiming their inheritance. Notice that the LORD did not consider Israel taking over the territory of the Canaanites as wrong. The LORD had promised this land to Abraham Isaac and Jacob long before. The men from these three tribes put importance on loyalty to the cause and serving the whole group not just doing their own thing and being renegades. They were to be willing to put their personal agenda and plans on hold for the greater good of the whole community of all of the 12 tribes.

Joshua had proved his loyalty to Moses and most all to the LORD. God selected him to replace Moses as leader and lead the Israelites into Canaan to defeat the Canaanites and possess the land. *"After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: 'Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them-the children of Israel.'" (Joshua 1:1-2)* The LORD goes on to encourage Joshua. *"Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them."* (v.6) Joshua was a mighty man of valor and a man of courage and conviction. Even he needed encouragement and instruction to be strong and courageous as a "mighty man of valor" would be expected to demonstrate.

At the actual time of crossing the Jordan and entering Canaan Joshua addressed the officers of the Israelites and reminded the three tribes of their commitment. *"And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke, saying, 'Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land.' 'Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them, 'until the LORD has given*

your brethren rest, as He gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD'S servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise." (Joshua 1:12-15)

The apostle Paul also referred to the disciples as "soldiers" in a number of his letters. (Philippians 2:25; 2 Timothy 2:3; 2 Timothy 2:4; Philemon 1:2) Notice especially 2 Timothy 2:3: "*You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*"

You and I are not fighting physical armies today. We do however fight spiritual armies and a very real spiritual battle. We don't respond however with physical swords and spears, or the modern equivalent. Paul tells us: "*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*" (Ephesians 6:12)

We do not have physical armor to put on as we enter the battle. But we indeed must have armor. "*Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*" (v.13)

I encourage us as we pray daily to pray for all of the spiritual armor that only God can provide. (Ephesians 6:10-17)

We must fight back with a spiritual weapon, "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*" (v.17) God has also given us the spirit of "*power and of love and of a sound mind.*" (2 Timothy 1:7)

Just as when Christ faced the Deceiver, we respond with the word of God and break through any prisons or powers that may try to hold us. "*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.*" (2 Corinthians 10:4)

May we leave a legacy similar to that of the apostle Paul. "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*" (2 Timothy 4:7). Let us be

vigilant, and be men and women of a spiritual army, allowing God to live in us and march duly and willingly forward toward the Kingdom of God.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Scott Hoefker

Pastor, CGM

Church of God Ministries (CGM)

(Ministerios de la Iglesia de Dios)

tshoefker@cogministries.org / www.cogministries.org

P.O. Box 983, Daphne, AL, 36526-0983 / 251-930-1797 Office