

The Book of Philippians

Notes: Doug Hamilton

The Mindset of the Battlefield (Philippians 2:12-18)

There is more to being a soldier than grabbing a weapon and running onto the battlefield. A soldier of today's military will have much training before they are ever sent out to the battlefield to face a possible enemy. All the way from handling a weapon to the ethics, his or her mind is being molded into the mind of a soldier.

As soldiers of Christ, we have the obligation to be trained in such a way that we hold the correct mindset to be ready for what lies ahead. The devil and his minions of the spiritual world are more terrifying than any enemy we could ever meet on an earthly battlefield. If we do not have our minds properly molded, then we could end up doing more harm than good, destroying the mission and possibly dying behind enemy lines. In this text the apostle Paul will cover the three simple and effective mindsets that every soldier of Christ must have under his helmet.

On the battlefield...

1) We must have OBEDIENCE in the midst of FEAR.

12-13 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

- Any battlefield can be a scary thing, finding ourselves in difficult and seemingly unbearable circumstances. There is no comfort in knowing that your enemy wants you out of the picture and will stop at nothing to take you down as a trophy. Countless soldiers in the history of battle have been given orders to fight impossible conflicts, march up the most difficult hills and invade the most unforgiving territories. It was not because they wanted to wade into danger or necessarily meet their end, but that they had been given command.
- Every soldier of Christ that marches out to the battlefield had better understand that their commanding officer Jesus has commanded them to march into some fearful locations. He asks us to take the gospel to the entire world; He wants us to live fruitful lives; He desires us to take as many to heaven that we can. He wants us to reach out to people different from us, people who are like us and people who really do not like us one bit. Much of this is pretty scary, but we must have the right mindset, for all war is scary.

Just as you have always OBEYED...

- We must understand with the soldier of Christ, when He commands us, there is the obligation to OBEY in the midst of FEAR. This can be a tough mindset to have when facing the giants of this life, but it can and must be done.

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- a) We obey not only in the presence of the commander, but even when we are alone out on the battlefield.
- b) We work out our salvation for the mission that our General sent us out on, knowing that to not follow the marching orders would lead us in eternal danger.
- c) We march on knowing that God is at work in us to bring about a great victory today and every day. We have the greatest Commander in Chief with Jesus and His plan will succeed!
- We must remember that Paul was just talking about Jesus "being obedient to the point of death" (2:8). God had a plan to save all mankind from their sins through the death of His only begotten Son, but Jesus still had to accept the mission. He talked about it often throughout His ministry. He fervently prayed about it in the Garden of Gethsemane. He could have turned down the mission for there was much to fear, but He was OBEDIENT. Because of this we have hope and a future through the gospel message which He commanded to be taken to all the world.
- Do not ever forget that when we go out to the battlefield we must have obedience in the midst of fear.

2) We must have PURITY in the midst of PERVERSITY.

14-16 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵ so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

- The word that Paul uses for grumbling is quite unusual. In the Greek Septuagint it is the same word used for the Israelites that murmured against Moses as they were in the desert (Ex 15:24; 16:9; Numbers 16:41). It was the complaining the people had for God and His leader Moses.
 - They griped about not having enough water
 - not enough food
 - the wrong kind of food
 - not being able to take the land because of the size of the enemy
 - against the leadership
 - about wanting to go back to false gods
- It was absolutely pitiful that God had brought them out of Egypt and promised them the land of their forefathers, but they lost sight of it. It led to division, dissension and sin. Paul used that generation as he had done so many times before so that the generation of Christians would not go that route.
- He tells them to be blameless and innocent. That phrase referred back to quality of the offerings the people of Israel were to bring to the altar, for it meant without blemish. They would not to offer God the sickly looking crippled lamb, but the best of the flock. This was the quality that Jesus

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offered on our behalf (Hebrews 9:14). We certainly could not outdo Jesus, but we can offer the best purity possible.

- The Israelites were to "be a light unto the gentiles" (Is 49:6) by the way they lived. They failed miserably. In the end they had become a "crooked and perverse generation" (Deut. 32:4-5).
- Now is our turn. We are to be a light to the world (Matt 5:14) by holding to a high level of purity in order stand out among the crooked and perverse generation that surrounds us. We are to shine like the stars among a dark night.
 - While the world is living in adultery, fornication, pornography and homosexuality, we are to shine like lights by living in purity concerning our sexuality.
 - As the world is living in lying, cheating, stealing and greed, we are to shine with purity through speaking the truth, being a blessing to others and generous to all.
 - While the world is hurting their next generation through neglect, abuse and outright selfishness, we are to shine by raising our children strong with the love of Christ dwelling in their minds and hearts, carrying the hope of eternal life for their future.
- When going into the battlefield, we must have PURITY in the midst of PERVERSITY so that we stand out to the world as the victors we are.

3) We must have JOY in the midst of SACRIFICE.

17-18 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. ¹⁸ You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

- Once again this is another of the many references the Levitical sacrificial system. Paul referred to himself as a drink offering. The drink offering consisted of wine being poured out at the altar of sacrifice (Num 6:15, 15:5; Hos 9:4; 2 Kgs 16:13; Joel 1:9, etc). Pouring it out with the burnt offering sent the message to God, "I am fully pouring myself out for you".
- The Jews were not the only ones who used such, for the gentiles mixed the blood of their pagan sacrifices and poured it out in honor of their gods. Therefore both gentile and Jewish converts would have understood the meaning.
- There is another interesting connection of a practice that soldiers used to do when pouring out a drink offering in honor of their comrades that displayed great acts of sacrifice. We see such an example in 2 Sam 23:14-17. While King David warred with the Philistines near his home area of Bethlehem, he craved the water of a spring he used to drink from in the past. Three of his soldiers heard about this and secretly risked their lives to break through the Philistine camp and bring back some of the water for the king. David was so moved by such honor that he refused to drink it, but instead poured it out as a drink offering to God, saying, "Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this. *Shall I drink* the blood of the men who

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- went in *jeopardy* of their lives?" He honored his God through the honor these men bestowed upon him by risking their lives to gain it.
- Now Paul is comparing his life as a drink offering unto God. He was locked in prison and his future seemed rather bleak. Just like a cup of wine was slowly emptied over the burnt offering, Paul's life seemingly was coming to an end in his service for the gospel. However he did get out of prison that time and went on to further his work in Christ.
 - In a later passage at the end of Paul's life, he went back to the same analogy. *2 Timothy 4:6-8 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸ in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.* His life would soon be over for the cause of Christ, but he was rejoicing. He would soon receive his crown and encouraged Timothy in the message that the same crown was waiting for all Christians.
 - He is doing the same thing here with the Philippians. Paul is rejoicing because it is for Christ. He feels obligated to share his joy with the Philippians so that they are not discouraged. With this in mind, Paul encourages them to do the same and share the joy with him. What is the basis of this all? We must remember that Jesus did the same when He "emptied Himself" (2:7) in His earthly ministry leading to His sacrifice. And in that act of love on the cross, He had joy and wants us to rejoice in the midst of sacrifice.
 - When we center our life on the drink offering Jesus made for us by pouring His life out, it changes our whole being. We encompass the joy of serving him as we make sacrifice for one another. We share that joy to the others and they in turn pass it along. It can be a never ending cycle of joy to countless people. Don't ever forget this when going into the battlefield of the world.

We are in a war against darkness. Satan will try everything he can to cause our fall. If we keep the right mindset, he will not be successful and God will be glorified.