



summer/spring 2009
volume xxiv - number 2

CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

"NO MAN THAT WARRETH ENTANGLETH HIMSELF IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS LIFE, THAT HE MAY PLEASE HIM WHO HATH CHOSEN HIM TO BE A SOLDIER."

II TIMOTHY 2:4

A PUBLICATION OF MIKE KEYES MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

ADVANCING UNDER FIRE (PART ONE)

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14 "NOT THAT I HAVE ALREADY ATTAINED, OR AM ALREADY PERFECTED; BUT I PRESS ON, THAT I MAY LAY HOLD OF THAT FOR WHICH CHRIST JESUS HAS ALSO LAID HOLD OF ME. BRETHREN, I DO NOT COUNT MYSELF TO HAVE APPREHENDED; BUT ONE THING I DO, FORGETTING THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND AND REACHING FORWARD TO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE AHEAD, I PRESS TOWARD THE GOAL FOR THE PRIZE OF THE UPWARD CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS."

In this great passage from Philippians, Paul talks about the importance of not only holding your ground spiritually speaking, but also, to advance under fire.

And there's no better time than now to be reminded of this, because it doesn't just apply to Paul, but to all of us as soldiers in the army of the Lord. With the global recession still as entrenched as it is, we need to keep our eyes on Jesus, and remember that our responsibilities and our assignments from God have not changed. Our job while on earth is to fulfill the Great Commission (see Mark 16:15-18). Nothing has changed with respect to this – recession or no recession, God expects us to trust Him, use our faith, exercise

our authority, and get the job done in the Name of Jesus. We're to go into all the world and present the gospel to everyone, no matter what's going on at home.

Notice in this passage, Paul talks twice about "pressing on". He says it in verse 12, and again in verse 14. The word "press" there simply means to advance even as resistance is being applied against us. Strong's concordance says it means to "pursue", or to "follow after". Vine's New Testament Expository says it means to "speed on earnestly", as in a footrace. The point to be understood is that in context, Paul is talking about the very real fact that as he contends earnestly for the faith

(Jude 3), he's going to encounter intense resistance along the way from the enemies of our soul, which would be the devil and his demons, the world system Satan is the god of (see 2 Cor.4:4), and our own dead-to-sin flesh. As he "pursues" the prize that goes with the upward call of God, and as he "follows after" the Lord (see 1 Cor.11:1), and as he runs this race to get the prize (see 1 Cor.9:24-27), he's going to be aimed at and shot at. And, if you haven't already found this out, let me educate you here. The more you want to do for God in this life will be the proportionate degree you're shot at by the enemy. Listen to Paul talking in Acts about this:

ACTS 20:22-24 "AND SEE, NOW I GO BOUND IN THE SPIRIT TO JERUSALEM, NOT KNOWING THE THINGS THAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME THERE, EXCEPT THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT TESTIFIES IN EVERY CITY, SAYING THAT CHAINS AND TRIBULATIONS AWAIT ME. BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD. "

None of these things move me, he says. What things? The many different forms of persecution that had been brought against this man of God. How about what he says in the book of 2 Corinthians? Read chapters 1,4,6 and 11, and try to imagine what this man went through for the gospel's sake. When Jesus talked to Ananias about Paul in Acts 9, He said Paul would

suffer greatly for His Name's sake, and He wasn't kidding!

Especially in this shallow, carnal, western-world Body of Christ, Christians need to be taught that God promises us blessings as well as difficulties and persecution. When people talk about the "Hundredfold return" in the gospel of Mark, most never

bother to quote the whole promise. They only quote the part about receiving the good stuff - houses, lands, possessions, people and such. But Jesus also said in the same sentence that along with the things that everybody wants, would be the things that nobody wants – intense levels of persecution. Let's read the promise, in it's entirety:



MARK 10:28-31 "THEN PETER BEGAN TO SAY TO HIM, 'SEE, WE HAVE LEFT ALL AND FOLLOWED YOU.' SO JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID, "ASSUREDLY, I SAY TO YOU, THERE IS NO ONE WHO HAS LEFT HOUSE OR BROTHERS OR SISTERS OR FATHER OR MOTHER OR WIFE OR CHILDREN OR LANDS, FOR MY SAKE AND THE GOSPEL'S, WHO SHALL NOT RECEIVE A HUNDREDFOLD NOW IN THIS TIME — HOUSES AND BROTHERS AND SISTERS AND MOTHERS AND CHILDREN AND LANDS, WITH PERSECUTIONS — AND IN THE AGE TO COME, ETERNAL LIFE. "

Notice those two words at the end of this promise — the words "...with persecutions." So then, God does promise the 100fold return, but what's included in that return? Blessings? Absolutely, but a few other things as well. He promises us persecution, difficulties, challenges, hardships. Opportunities to quit and give up. Opportunities to doubt God and believe the lies of the devil. Those things will also increase 100fold when you leave everything to follow Jesus!

When we talk about "pressing on", and "advancing under fire", what are we talking about? We're talking about a mindset that refuses to wilt under pressure, or give up, tuck tail and run in the heat of the battle. Too many Christians have done just that: they've become deserters on the battlefield. In the heat of the fight, they've run from the enemy in fear. May that never be said of you, my friend! We need to learn how to "press on", under fire, with bullets whizzing by, bombs exploding overhead,

and shrapnel flying through the air. No matter the intensity of the attack or counter-attack against us, we keep moving forward for Jesus.

According to Proverbs 24:11, 12, our responsibilities and our assignments are always 2-fold in nature. We're on earth to work with Jesus to first of all, deliver those drawn towards death, and secondly, hold back those stumbling towards the slaughter (meaning: an eternity in hell). To "deliver" and "hold back" people from spiritual death and eternal separation from God - that's our job. That's why I'm here, and why you're here. It's not about how big of a house you can own, or how expensive your car is, or how many designer clothes hang in your closet. It's about winning souls, and the more you want to do that, the more of a target you become to the devil.

It's no coincidence Proverbs 24:10 precedes the directive to deliver and hold back sinners from spiritual destruction.

Verse 10 tells us that if we faint in the day of adversity, our strength is very small. Why is that statement placed before the statements about delivering and holding people back from hell fire? Because you have to be strong, disciplined, focused and passionate for the things of God if you're going to have the inner fortitude to advance under spiritual, mental or physical attack from the enemy. When you're trying your best to reach people in the name of Jesus, you're going to be attacked — no doubt about it. That's one reason why James chapter 1 tells us to be joyful when we encounter different kinds of testing, temptations and trials — knowing the testing of our faith works patience, which has its perfect work to bring us to the place of triumph and victory.

It's also no coincidence that Proverbs 24:16 follows a few verses after the directives to deliver people and hold them back from the slaughter. Here's what it says:

PROVERBS 24:16 "FOR A RIGHTEOUS MAN MAY FALL SEVEN TIMES AND RISE AGAIN, BUT THE WICKED SHALL FALL BY CALAMITY."



What is this verse telling us, in the context of advancing under fire? Its telling us that its not a matter of if we fall, but what we do after we fall! Do we get up, and keep moving forward, even if we're wounded in some way? Or, do we sit down and invite the world to join us in a pity party? If you don't already know this, let me help you here once again. The world doesn't care about you, and most Christians don't care about you either. The only One who truly cares and will never leave you is Jesus. I've learned these lessons the hard way, but I've learned them nonetheless. You can sit in your corner feeling sorry for yourself all you want, but life goes on and the world will keep going without you. Its natural for people to want everybody else to stop their lives to come and sit with them as they bemoan their current lot in life, but that's an illusion of the flesh my friend. People's pity, sympathy or empathy won't help you one bit. Fact is, the world continues to turn with or without you, so you might just as well stand up, dust yourself off, and get back in the fight! The battles go on. The war goes on, so you best get your mind right about that, and keep

advancing against the enemy.

All of us sin, make mistakes and disobey God. The only One who didn't was Jesus. He's the only One who lived His entire life without even one sin being committed – which in and of itself, is a feat I still marvel at. All the rest of us sin and miss the mark, even such stalwarts as Paul. (He writes about his carnal struggles in Romans 6 and 7). The fact is we all stumble, but when we do, we're never to just lay there feeling sorry for ourselves. We're told to get up, receive our forgiveness, learn from our mistakes, and keep moving forward, even when we have unanswered questions for God about who, what, when and why! In other words, when we fall, we purpose to always fall forward, never backwards! That means that even when we fall, we're still advancing! If we fall forward, we're still two or three steps ahead of where we were before we fell. To keep moving under fire, we learn from our sins and mistakes, and with God's help, improve our spiritual "batting average" so-to-speak. It means that even if we've got questions with no answers at the moment, we trust God and

keep moving forward. It also means we're committed to the attack, no matter how intense the bombardment may be against us. No one runs, retreats or surrenders – ever!

I'm reminded of one particular movie called "Saving Private Ryan". It's a very vivid and intense portrayal of war, in this case, World War II. The opening scenes depict the D-Day assaults on the beaches of France, and in particular, Omaha beach. The carnage is appalling, with the audience left in utter amazement at the resolve, grit and determination of the Allied soldiers as they tried to take that beach under withering enemy fire. Christians need to see such movies, as gruesome as they may be, to remind themselves of the task at hand. In a very real way, we're the ones now assaulting the beaches of the world, bringing the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. And up above us, all along the beach, are fortified bunkers and gun emplacements manned by the devil and his demons, just waiting for us to make the charge and attack the beach!

LOSING SOME BATTLES DOESN'T MEAN WE CAN'T WIN THE WAR

Don't be discouraged. If you've fallen, you can decide to get up. If you've got unanswered questions, you can decide to relax and commit your inquiries to God! All questions will be answered in detail – sooner or later. The righteous man falls many times it says, but keeps getting up. You do that by faith, not feelings. Many times I've received my forgiveness by faith, when all my feelings said otherwise. I certainly didn't feel forgiven, but that's part of what it means to walk by faith and not by sight. 1 John 1:9 is what it is. If we confess our sins to God, He's faith-

ful to forgive us and cleanse us – period. Receive that promise, and take it at face value. Never mind your feelings, because they'll change by the hour. And no matter what kind of "hell" you think you're going through at the moment, suck it up and get back in the fight. Pick up your weapons and re-engage the enemy. Praise the Lord right in the enemy's face. Taunt him with your worship of the most-high God. Quote Bible verses out loud in response to every lie he tries to sow into your mind. And I like this one especially – laugh at the devil – right in his face. Through all the physi-

cal, emotional or spiritual pain, laugh at the enemy, and then make him pay for what he's tried to do against you.

Let him know that just because he's tried this latest attack against you, you're going out to win more souls, hold more meetings, lay hands on more sick people, and spend more time with God in prayer, praise and worship. I mean, take what the devil's thrown at you, and ram it right back down his throat! Amen! That's how we attack! That's how we press on! That's how we advance under fire!

