

You're In God's Army Now!

Joe Slater

War in Gaza. War in the Ukraine. War in Iraq. War in Libya. There is no shortage of wars!

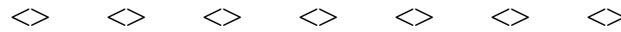
Christianity has never been advanced at the point of the sword. *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal"* (2 Corinthians 10:4). But yes, Christians are engaged in warfare, though it is of a spiritual nature. Do we take this war seriously?

Our goal is not to "go along and get along," but to destroy Satan's strongholds and capture as many people as we can for Jesus. Meanwhile, we strive not to become casualties ourselves. As soldiers of Christ, we put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6).

We have a cause that is worth fighting for. Paul called it *"the good fight of faith"* (1 Timothy 6:12). This is not some petty squabble. Absolute evil is pitted against total righteousness. There is no such thing as neutrality; either you are with Jesus all the way, or you are against Him, even if you don't intend to be (Luke 11:23).

Once you have enlisted in God's army, there is no honorable discharge or retirement. You are a soldier for life unless you defect. As he faced imminent death, Paul looked back over his life and said he had fought the good fight (2 Timothy 4:7). *Semper Fidelis – Always Faithful.* That motto would fit Paul, and we ought to serve so that it fits us. Such service may involve enduring *"hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 2:3). It certainly will mean putting Jesus and His church first and foremost in our lives, rather than being preoccupied with mundane matters. *"No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who enlisted him as a soldier"* (2 Timothy 2:4).

One last thing about this army: It's all volunteer! Becoming a Christian is something you do of your own free will. You *"obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered"* (Romans 6:17). God doesn't force anyone to serve Him; you are free to *"choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve"* (Joshua 24:15). May we all make the right choice, and may we be always faithful!



PARABLE OF THE PENCIL

The Pencil Maker took the pencil aside, just before putting him into the box. "There are five things you need to know," he told the pencil, "before I send you out into the world. Always remember them and never forget, and you will become the best pencil you can be."

"1: You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in Someone's hand."

"2: You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time, but you'll need it to become a better pencil."

"3: You will be able to correct any mistakes you might make."

"4: The most important part of you will always be what's inside."

"And 5: On every surface you are used on, you must leave your mark. No matter what the condition, you must continue to write."

The pencil understood and promised to remember, and went into the box with purpose in its heart.

--Author Unknown (via *Bulletin Gold*)

Light is Pleasant

The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun (Ecclesiastes 11:7).

I've always liked the daytime better than the nighttime. Light provides some security, comfort and stability. Darkness creates doubt and insecurity. Walking in the light is easy; walking at night is difficulty. In this passage Solomon notes that light is "pleasant." What he is talking about is the joy of life. The dead do not see the light of day. They cannot use their "eyes to see the sun." Therefore all should have the 'glad to be alive' attitude. This attitude teaches us that we should live life as follows:

First, we should *live life optimistically*. Are we glad to be alive? Do we wake up each morning and thank the Lord for another day that we can "see the sun"? When one starts each day with pessimism, he will only see the bad. He will fail to see, and enjoy, God's wonderful gifts. The pessimist doesn't "see the sun," and fails to find any pleasantness in the light.

Second, we should *live life opportunistically*. Earlier Solomon had noted that death ends all opportunity (9:4-7, 10). Each day we should "seize the moment" and do good (Galatians 6:10). When your eyes see the sun it means another day has been given to you. This means another day to work, "for the night is coming when no man can work" (John 9:4).

Third, we should *live life obediently*. Each new day is also a new day to serve God. Solomon recognizes that those who fail to fear God will face God's judgment (8:11; 11:9; 12:13, 14). God gives us the gift of life so that we might serve Him (Eph. 2:10). He gives us time so that we might repent of sin and follow Him (2 Peter 3:9-15).

Yes, light is pleasant, and it is good to see the sun. May each of us take each new day and live it optimistically, opportunistically and obediently.

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