

An Old Soldier of the Cross Went Home

2 Timothy 2:3-5

As most of you know, brother Wayne Redford left this life last Sunday night at about 11 pm. Over the years I have found it so interesting that many Christians that have given their lives to service are called home on the Lord's Day. It seems so fitting for that to be the case with Wayne.

I'm suspending our series on the Sermon on the Mount today because Wayne has been on my heart all week. I've thought about little else since I received the news of his death. So, this sermon is something I want to do to remind all of us what it means to be a Soldier of Christ.

I met Wayne for the first time on November 9, 2008 when Joyce and I came to West Side to see if it might be a good fit for us and for you. I taught a Bible class that morning and Wayne came to me immediately afterward and said, "I appreciate having the truth taught." Nothing else just that. We had a good worship service and wonderful pot luck afterward. I had asked the Elders to arrange the time after the meal to meet back in the auditorium for a question and answer session. Wayne asked the first question. I don't remember what he asked but knowing him, I'm certain it was a very good question!

This morning I'm going to make four points about being a good soldier of Christ. I want you to know, to me, Wayne was the epitome of each of these points.

First – A Good Soldier Is Dedicated.

Dedication comes from different sources. A person can be dedicated because they have no choice. For example, I knew men who "joined" the Navy and once they saw what it was all about, they had the mentality that I have to do this - so I'll do this. They had no choice because there was a contract that would be strictly enforced. That kind of dedication will wane immediately once the force of the contract is gone. Then there is the kind of dedication that exists because they love that to which they are committed. That would certainly describe Wayne.

Dedication that comes from love is what one sees in a marriage relationship. Even when there is trouble in the relationship, dedication causes that couple to work to overcome the trouble.

The very word “dedication” first appears in the 14th century as a name for the solemn act of dedicating something, such as a calendar day or a church, to a divine being or to a sacred use. The word—formed from the Latin past participle of *dedicare*, meaning “to dedicate”—did not take hold in secular contexts until a few centuries later when English speakers began using it to refer to the act of devoting time and energy to a particular purpose.

Being dedicated to Jesus and His church is something every child of God should commit to early after their conversion. Being dedicated answers a good many questions that will come up over the years.

Second – The Good Soldier Is Durable

In our text this morning, Paul told young Timothy to endure hardship. Paul wanted this young preacher to expect hardship as a Christian. All of us have suffered hardship at some point because we serve Jesus. It may be something minor, but we might not suffer it if we just forgot about serving Jesus. That we will suffer as a Christian is not surprising. Peter tell us this in 1 Peter 4:16. *“Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.”*

I’ve watched Christians all over this country as they suffered because of their relationship with the Son of God. In Virginia Beach we had a young woman whose husband forbid her from coming to church. She had obeyed the gospel and wanted to do right. She continued to come to church over the objections of her husband. He made sure she suffered. He would make sure on Sunday morning to take the only car they had and go off in it somewhere. She would call other Christians and seek a ride to church for her and her daughter. Her husband never came around as far as I know but while we knew her – she suffered mightily but endured the hardship. She was Durable.

Third – The Good Soldier Is Deliberate

Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:4 *“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”*

The primary idea behind this is that a good soldier of Jesus is not easily distracted. Distraction by things of this world is so easy to have happen to us. We can begin to want things this life has to offer, which is fine, but we must never allow those things to distract our time and attention away from the real prize – heaven as our home through serving Jesus.

If we allow the distractions of this world to cause us to take our mind off things above, we can easily become a target of Satan. Satan waits patiently for us to have a weak moment and that is when he attacks. When we allow distractions then we are at our weakest. It can get to a point where the things of this world begin to take precedence. Remember, Satan is the enemy of the Soldier of Christ. Satan is the one we must defeat. Paul warns us to get rid of all those things which cause us to be distracted from what is important.

I remember our Son Brian being about 8 years old. We were living in Flint, MI and it was the first place Brian had seen so much snow. I had bought a snow shovel for myself and a smaller one for him. We'd just had a foot or more fall and we were out in the driveway clearing it. It was a heavy snow and Brian was tiny. Each time he dug in with that shovel it was all he could do to extract it and throw the snow to the side. He got so frustrated he was near tears. I saw what was happening and started just digging in about 2-3 inches and then throwing it to the side. Brian saw what I was doing, and he did the same. He was very deliberate not to take on too much for his small body.

I learned a lesson from my boy that day. Don't take on more than you can handle but take all you can. Brian was taking snow precisely, deliberately so that he could do all that he could to help his Dad. We need to do the same for our Father in Heaven.

Fourth – The Good Soldier Is Delightful

Remember, the number one duty of every soldier of Christ is to please our God. Psalm 1:1-2 says, *“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.”*

God is most pleased with us when we follow our orders, we are diligent at our post, we are attentive as watchmen, we are loyal to our cause, we fight to win, and we are always steadfast.

There is a sense of comraderie when one is in the military. The training you go through is to always have your shipmates back. I’ve gone into fires with nothing but a 3.5” hose and the knowledge that the other guys on that hose were there for me. Knowing that you will not be let down, not be abandoned can keep you going. Knowing that from others should make one demonstrate the same behavior to those who have his back. I’ll never leave you, never give up till the job is done. That makes for a “delightful” partnership.

So it is as Christians. We are a church that is bound together by the blood of Jesus and His love for us. He demonstrated that love through His death on the cross. That death and His example of love should create in me and in you the desire to remain faithful to Him but also to His brethren – that is, one another.

Being a good soldier requires effort. We must realize that we are not called to be part time soldiers. We do not wrestle with, *“Flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Ephesians 6:12).

As strong as Satan may be against me as an individual, he has no power against the army that I am a part of. When we stand together, we cannot be defeated by Satan or any power on this earth. They may kill us, but they cannot defeat us.

I'm going to miss Wayne and his example. He was all these things and more for me during the 10 years that I called him brother and friend. He being dead – yet speaks to me and through this sermon, to you.

May God grant you the courage and wisdom to fight the good fight and to remain faithful till death. Doing this will ensure you a place at the King's table for all eternity.