

War

Peter Faber

You would think that we would not have much in common with soldiers sitting in a foreign country fighting a war some fifty years ago. We get up in the morning, go to work and return again in the usual way day after day. Our lives for the most part are rather stable. But we are at war. And we must always wear the battle gear (Eph. 6:11). After reading a small pamphlet called MEDITATIONS written by our ministers for our men in the service, it made me more appreciative of what Christian military men went through in World War II. I was surprised that many things that they were concerned about and had to confront, are things with which we battle with today. We can certainly learn from these meditations and apply them to our lives today. Please read, learn and enjoy!

So let us be found in Him.

-Editor

FOREWARD

To you, our beloved boys in uniform, we dedicate this booklet.

It was the consideration of your spiritual needs that prompted the Churches of Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches to bring this volume into being. We hope that these brief meditations may be of real help to you. They have been written with a view to your needs and moods, to comfort and cheer and strengthen you in your present calling.

You will notice an index in the front of the book which may assist you in locating a meditation to fit your particular circumstances, whether it be lonesomeness or the time prior to battle.

Realizing that you men would appreciate amongst these meditations a message from your own pastor, all our ministers were asked to contribute one meditation.

We send this forth with the prayer that God may richly bless you by these our humble efforts.

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches,
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WHERE TO FIND IT – WHEN

Fearful - Matt. 14:22-33; Joh. 14; Rom. 8:31-39

Attracted by worldly pleasure-II Cor. 6:14- 18; Phil. 4:8, 8; I John 2:15-17

Grateful-Psalm 103; Psalm 116

Persecuted - Matt. 5:10; I Peter 4:12-19; Rev. 7:13-17; Luke 6:22, 23

Grief-stricken, sick, or dying-Psalm 22, 23, 73; Job 1:20-22;
Matt. 10:29-31; John 11:1-27

WATCH!

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” -1 Peter 5:8

The Church is like an army encamped in the enemy’s country.

Or, if you please, she is to be compared to a walled city, surrounded by bitter foes. The citizens of that city are the living members of the body of Christ. They have been called out of darkness into the marvelous light of God. They are a royal priesthood, an elect race, a peculiar possession unto God, and their calling is to shew forth the praises of Him that called them.

The foe is the devil and his host, all the powers of darkness. That enemy is ever on the alert to make an attack upon the city at a point that is not sufficiently guarded, that is left unprotected and defenseless for a moment, in order that he may enter the city and destroy its citizens.

Hence, the citizens must watch.

They must constantly stand guard at the individual gates of their own hearts, lest the enemy launch a surprise attack and enter the city. Hence, the admonition in the words above this meditation: be sober, be vigilant!

The foe is always active. His power and cunning are never to be underestimated. His hatred of the Church, and of the individual believers, is deadly and deeply rooted. Powerful is he.

He is the devil, Satan, and adversary of God in the world. Nor is he ever alone. For, first, he commands a veritable host of evil spirits. They fight on his side. They obey his command. They enhance his power. Besides, he is called the Prince of this world. In a spiritual-ethical sense of the word, the devil rules in the hearts of wicked men. And through the world the adversary has many means at his command. The pleasures and treasures of the world, the wisdom and power of men, worldly honor and fame and glory, are means he can and does employ. Besides, he is able to use force. Through that world he threatens to deprive you of your job, of liberty and life.

And he has a strong ally within the gates, in the motions of sin that are still in your members. The flesh of the citizens of the Kingdom of God hankers after the things of the world. It loves the world’s favor and fears its displeasure. It would follow after the world’s pleasures and avoid its suffering. It is easily lulled to sleep and persuaded to open the gates of the city to the enemy.

How necessary, then, to heed this admonition: be sober, be vigilant!

The devil is a roaring lion!

He would devour you! Not, you understand, physically. He is not interested in killing your body primarily. He wants to devour you spiritually. He would, if it were possible, shake your faith, destroy it, make you faithless. He would deprive you of the inheritance of the saints.

Nor are his methods always those of a roaring lion, even though as a roaring lion he would surely devour you. He does not always reveal himself in his true character. He knows how to come as an angel of light, as a wolf in sheep’s clothing. He can appear as a lamb, speak as a lamb, act like a lamb. He can speak very religiously: of righteousness, of truth, of peace, of making the world better. . . .

Always, therefore, you must be sober and vigilant. And especially when you are called, as you are in the Armed Forces of our country, to live in close contact with the world, far from home and church.

O, indeed, God preserves you, in His power!

But in that power, we must and do resist the enemy, fighting the good fight, that no one take our crown!

Hence, be sober, be vigilant!

Watch!

-Rev. H. Hoeksema

THOU DIDST IT!

“I will not open my mouth; because Thou didst it”- Psalm 39:9

My Christian Friends:

You are in the service! Just that, and no more, is already a serious matter. You are in some Army Camp, some Naval Training Station, some Air Field in this country or across the sea. You are away from home, your parents, wife, loved ones. You are separated from your friends, the social life you once enjoyed, the favorite sport in which you were wont to engage. Worst of all, you are away from your church, your fellow Christians, from what you are convinced is the purest preaching of the Word of God. And, you are in the midst of the world, cursing and swearing, filth and immorality, the like of which you never knew existed in this world. You are being trained for greater things to come. Perhaps, as you read these lines, you are no longer in "The States". You are in Korea, in Europe, or some battle- wagon. That makes the matter more serious still. Yes, you are in the service!

During the day you are busy - working, training. In the evening and at night you rest - tired, lonely. You think - think about home, the folks, brothers and sisters, “The boys,” church, many other things. You wonder about many things. You ask yourself questions, among others that question that is always being asked, at all times, in all circumstances: Why? Why am I in the service? What brought me here? Boys, it’s good to ask yourself that question. It’s good, too, most essential, that you come to the right solution. On the answer to this question depends your peace of heart and mind; your obedience to God.

Answers could be given to this question, that seek the reason for your present situation in the things of this earth. You are in the service, because you were drafted. That is true, of course. You had no choice in the matter. However, that is not the ultimate reason. You are in the service, perhaps in actual combat, because of the greed and evil lusts, the suspicions and distrust, of a wicked world. Countless lives have been and will continue to be sacrificed on the altar of human avarice, mutual hatred and distrust, territorial expansion. However, this too is not the ultimate reason. We must go deeper than that. If you don't, you will never have peace. You will be filled with confusion, disgust, bitterness, rebellion. Must I give my life for such things as that?! You are in the service to help preserve the American way of living. Well and good! That still does not rise above this earth.

Boys, you are in the service, because “Thou didst it.” There is the answer that will give you peace; the rock on which you may find rest. However dark may be your way, or rugged the road! God did it!

Whatever I might be able to say about this Word of God is not nearly as important as the text itself. The meaning is clear. Meditate on it! Say it! Just the way David did: “Thou didst it!” Make your own sermon. You can do it. “Thou” here refers to God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, and therefore the sole Ruler and Doer of all that is or ever can be. That God is your Father, full of justice and truth, mercy and love. He made you His children. He loves you as no earthly father can love his child. And He cares for you always. Your heavenly Father did it! He planned it, just this way, from all eternity. He plans all things, does He not? He plans all things with infinite wisdom, so that all things must work together without fail for His glory, the perfecting of His kingdom, the salvation of His people. He planned your way too. And He actually did it! You believe that, do you not, even though you may not understand? He uses human means, even evil

means, - but He does all things. And you believe, do you not, that He does it in infinite goodness, perfect wisdom, eternal love?

Then, boys, you will also be able to say: "I will not open my mouth." No, that does not mean that we will say nothing, either good or bad. How wicked and ungrateful that would be in the light of His infinite goodness and Fatherly love. It means, that we will not rebel, open our mouth to curse, criticize, question. We will not say that the Lord's ways are not good. However, we will open our mouths. We will confess our sins in complete unworthiness. We will thank Him for all His blessings. We will petition Him for all our needs, temporal, and eternal. In all our ways we will praise the God of our salvation. Yes, we will open our mouths, and this will we say:

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform:
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take:
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and will break
In blessings on your head."

-Rev. R. Veldman

COMING AFTER OUR COMMANDER

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." - Matt. 16:24

What a parable the army and its life presents of the Kingdom of Heaven! Evident throughout Scripture is the fact also here that the Kingdom of Heaven comes to pass through parables. Likenesses may be drawn from the point of view of weapons: breastplate, helmet, shield and sword; of the idea of war and enmity between the opposing forces of light and darkness; and even of the detail of personnel: soldiers with their chief general or commander-in-chief, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is to the last-named likeness that I would call your attention, and that from the point of view of Matthew 6:4. Coming after Jesus! A serious matter, even though oft heard in our time. Also, little understood because of its superficial application. For what does it mean? Surely first of all we must know WHO this Jesus is. He is not just a wonderful example worthy to be copied. He is God of God. The Son of God come in the flesh for our sin. To so evaluate Him is the same as confessing our sin and corruption. Besides Him there is no salvation. Only through His suffering for us can the debt of our guilt be erased. To be His disciple means to take His Word as sole rule of life.

The only way in which that is realized is following the three-fold injunction of the text: first: "Let him deny himself"; second: "Let him take up his cross"; and third: "Follow Me." What

a strange set of requirements. Discipleship in regard to worldly movements offer fame, freedom from care, honor, riches and glory. They are deemed fitting lures and incentives to exert oneself to the utmost. Not so with Jesus! In fact, with Him there is no enticement by riches and fame but the very opposite. All that is dear to us must go!

Oh, yes, the demands of Christ are absolute. Notice that in the first place He does not demand that we shall forego some pleasantries of this life. Do not interpret the command so: deny thyself some things in life. Even that were possible to perform and by many of the world is done for their own safety, health and personal advancement. No, the Word here is, in all its terrible emphasis: "Deny thyself." That is the exact opposite of self-maintenance. Before God it is tantamount to confessing that we have no merit, no righteousness and so no basis for salvation and that the eternal glory of the saints can only be ours through divine, free and sovereign grace. Before our fellowmen self-denial is the willingness to be the least. Never to maintain self for self's sake. An absolute Word! No coming after Jesus is possible without it.

Further, "Let him take up his cross." This does not only mean that we bear burdens in this life. All men must do this, willing or not. But this must be a willing, desirous suffering of the same thing Christ suffered. Our crosses must be slivers of His. Never, of course, as though our suffering has merit or atoning power. So the Cross of Jesus stands all alone. But His Cross was also a manifestation of suffering at the hands of those that hated God and Christ because He revealed God. Those that will come after Jesus, having His Word as guiding principle, will incur the same hatred of the party of darkness. The injunction is: be willing to bear that reproach without rebellion. The servant is no more than the Master; the soldier no greater than the Commander- in-chief.

And lastly, so "Follow Me," says Jesus. Literally, imitate, walk after Him. Spiritually this signifies the desire to listen without the slightest rebellion, to be instructed in the way of sanctification whatever the consequences may be, in every condition and place of our calling here below, to remain true to the colors of the banner of Christ, singing: "Where'er He lead, I'll follow."

To that end He calls, strengthens, equips and lead to glory. Deny thyself. . . take up thy cross . . . follow Jesus. It is the way to His victory given of grace as a crown to all the faithful, which He will give to all that look for His glorious appearance.

-Rev. H. H. Kuiper

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