



BAND OF BROTHERS

COURAGE • HUMILITY • UNITY

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The Courage for Battle

"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." Thoreau

"The Lord is a warrior, the Lord is his name." (Ex. 15:3)

"Get ready for war! Call out your best warriors!" (Joel 3:9 NLT)

"We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2 Cor. 4:18)

"For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world." (Eph. 6:12)

"[My sinful nature] is at war with my mind." (Rom. 7:23)

"The ones who win this battle against the world are the ones who believe that Jesus is the Son of God." (1 John 5:4-5)

"There are forces at work in this world besides evil." (Gandalf - Lord of the Rings)

"Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your friends, your families, and your homes!" (Nehemiah 4:14)

"You say that I am a king, and you are right," Jesus said. "I was born for that purpose." (John 18:37)

"Then there was war in heaven.... (Rev. 12:7) And then the beast was allowed to wage war against God's holy people and to overcome them. And he was given authority to rule over every tribe and people and language and nation. (Rev. 13:7)... But the Lamb will defeat [Evil] because he is Lord over all lords and King over all kings, and his people are the called and chosen and faithful ones." (Rev. 17:14)... And [his people] overcame [Satan] because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of their testimony. And they were not afraid to die." (Rev. 12:11)

The Larger Unseen Story: Something very important is happening. You may not clearly see it, but can you feel it? A movie called *The Passion*, clearly depicting the price Jesus paid for us on the cross, was a blockbuster. A book called *A Purpose Driven Life*, about God's glorious purpose for us, has sold over 30 million copies. A recent movie trilogy with subtle Gospel themes, *Lord*

of the Rings, and another movie that blatantly depicts the Gospel message, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, represent two of the top 1st weekend movie releases of all time. Yes, "Aslan is on the move," and a larger story is stirring and percolating in the hearts of men. Men are searching for "the more" of life. But how do we find it?

We are trying to see through the veil of confusion that covers our world - and into the "unseen." As stated by Paul the apostle, "We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2 Cor. 4:18) In this world, *things are not as they seem*. In spite of the craziness of this world and how bad and hopeless it seems, there is a King and He is sitting on the throne right this very moment. "You say that I am a king, and you are right," Jesus said. "I was born for that purpose." (John 18:37) God wants us to look and see into the unseen world - and embrace the truth of God's Kingdom. (see Rev. 4-5) So how do we remove the veil so that we can have the *eyes to see and the ears to hear*? "Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, then the veil is taken away." (2 Cor. 3:16) *But how does one truly "turn to the Lord," and what will be the costs and rewards of such a quest?* That is the central question addressed by this ministry.

Have you noticed that more men are curious and are asking questions about what it takes to follow Christ - to join His army? For the call of Christ is in our DNA - and in these times men's true desires are rising to the surface. But the way of God seems blurry and hard to find. God clearly is up to something in this generation - "for such a time as this!" And God is looking for those "sold out" men who will join His cause and be instruments of advancing His Kingdom: "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him." (2 Chron. 16:17)

Who "Me?" Many of us already have prayed to accept Christ as our Savior, so why do we still struggle so much? Where is the so-called "freedom?" Why is it so hard to defeat sexual sin? Why are life's circumstances so difficult? Since accepting the John 3:16 truth of salvation, for some reason we still don't feel "free." *We all have so many questions*. Many of us often wonder, "Could I possibly have any special part of what God is up to?" "Is there even a noble cause worth fighting for?" We have our doubts, because we men often feel thwarted as husbands, as fathers, as friends, as Christians, and in our careers. Deep inside we often feel dirty and wretched and too unworthy to be used by God in any meaningful and glorious way.

"Does God really have a *good* plan for *my* life," we ask? "If there is a God," we sometimes question, "it's hard to trust that He has our best interests at heart. Why all the struggle? Why the heartache?" And when we do muster the courage try to move through the difficult circumstances of our lives in a "healthy" way, it's as if our efforts will never be enough. No one, including our wives, typically notice the good things we try to do. Our efforts feel futile. *We men are tired, discouraged, weary, and deeply thirsty*.

"We are never free from the recurring waves of invasion. If the frontline of attack is not about clothes and food, it may be about money or the lack of money; or friends or the lack of friends; or the line may be drawn over difficult circumstances.

It is one steady invasion...." Oswald, *My Utmost*, Jan. 27

Most men have Lost Heart. Because life is so hard, we often retreat to our inner secret and dark worlds. In other words, we go into hiding. So many of us have lost heart that there is anything better to fill our God-given thirst and passion than pornography, illegitimate sex, alcohol, drugs, or the insatiable pursuit of power and money. We often fall into quiet, addictive behaviors - living secret lives to shield our shame from others. "They hate the light because they want to sin in the darkness." (John 3:20) Yet we know deep down that a sinful lifestyle is not truly satisfying. Instead, in those sinful caverns of our hearts we feel like cockroaches or rats scurrying about in the dark corners. *Surely we were made for something more - something better.*

In our shame and frustration we move away from God and from other God-given relationships - such as our wives, children, and friends. No one really knows about our inner struggles - and our loneliness! As C.S. Lewis remarks, rather than drinking the finest wine that is being offered, we have been fooled into believing that we should drink from the cesspools of life. "But where is this fine wine?" we lament.

In our craziness, we sometimes feel incredible anger and rage inside our hearts - because our stories were supposed to be different. As small boys, we never dreamed of being a "cockroach" living in the darkness. No - we always desired to be one of the heroes depicted on television or in the movies. We dreamed of wearing the white hat and being a rescuer by defeating those who were the perpetrators of evil. And our boyhood dreams of living a good life that matters - to fight for a noble cause - still lingers deep within our hearts today. But the hardships of life and the overwhelming sinful temptations have made us cynical. And our efforts rarely feel heroic. Too often we have been knocked down and cannot grasp the strength to get back up. It feels too shameful to tell anyone about all the dark struggles. "If they really knew *everything* about me," we lament in our shame, "how could they still love and respect me?"

So we often feel abandoned by God. And in our desperation, we try to take control of our lives - often shutting out God and others. "What went wrong?" we wonder. "Weren't we created in the image of God?" "Why is life so hard?" "Where is the hope?"

There is something better! It's time to put on the white hats again! There is a heroic mission that men are being called to join. This is a noble cause for which each of God's image-bearers were uniquely created and designed to be a part.

We are being called to be ***brothers of Christ - the King of kings and Lord of lords; to follow Him into battle; to become more like Him; and to rule with Him!*** *What an amazing heritage! "So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers."* (Heb. 2:11) And we each have an important, necessary, and yes - heroic role to play. So why will so many Christian men settle for the "cesspools of life?" What do we have to do to be "made holy" so that we can become more like Christ? Why have we gotten distracted by the lure of what the world offers - which has no eternal meaning or value?

We get bombarded with constant lies about who we are from Satan, "the great accuser." "How could God use me - a cockroach?" we hear in our minds. "Look at all the horrible, dark, and sinful things I do!" The battle against our sinful nature feels relentless. We all can identify with the apostle Paul's lament: "I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't. When I want to do well, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway." (Rom. 7:18-19) Satan would like for us to simply give up - to stay knocked down - to believe that the old sinful nature will win the "*war with my mind.*" (Rom. 7:23)

Yes, there is an awful being that hates us to our very core and will do everything to destroy, discourage, and mock us. Satan does not want us to embrace the freedom offered by Christ and to live out our God-given heritage as we are being sanctified and made holy. Evil desires that we live in bondage, oppression, and rebellion. Sin in our lives will separate us from a perfect God, and our sinful lifestyles are the greatest obstacles to living out our God-given purpose. Satan and his demonic forces fear the day when the veil of hopelessness will be removed; when his fearful lies will be exposed; when the darkness of his temptations are brought into the light; and when we finally raise up our swords with anger and rage against our sinful lifestyles and embrace our true heritage as image-bearers of God.

The Bible teaches that there will be a day when men will pull out their swords and unite for freedom's sake - when men finally will embrace the atonement of the cross and choose to no longer live in the dark bondage of sin - and when we clearly see that what the world has to offer is meaningless. Satan knows when this happens, Evil will be destroyed! *We are close to that day!*

The call to War. What is going on? *We are in a war with the world, the flesh, and the devil* (collectively "Evil" or "The Enemy" in this writing)! *The stakes are high! The kingdoms of light and darkness are colliding. The battle lines are being drawn - this is the epic battle of Good vs. Evil! This is THE Great War - and you are essential to the cause! You are being called upon to fulfill your destiny to be a "mighty hero."*

This War is invisible, internal, and often unexplainable. But it is real! Of course

you feel it! The odds against us seem overwhelming and evil feels relentless. These are very important days - very possibly the last days! But there is great hope because our King is rising up an army of fully devoted followers! The Kingdom forces are led by Jesus Christ, and His armies are advancing. And in spite of what sins have been committed, you are being asked to join Him. It's what you were made for! It is your destiny!

When Christ returns to earth in visible form, He will return armed for battle - ready to strike down the nations, with his robe dipped in blood and the armies of heaven following him on white horses. (see Rev. 19:11-16) "On his robe and thigh [will be] written this title: *King of Kings and Lord of Lords.*" Jesus came last time as suffering servant, a lamb as a sacrifice for our sins. He will return as a military commander - a conqueror and king to execute judgment. Jesus says, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Matt. 10:34) If we are followers of Christ, then we are following Him into battle - to help advance the Kingdom of God. Our risen Lord is calling out to us, "**Come, be my disciples ...**" (Matt. 4:19)

"I will do this so you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name." (Isa. 45:3)

"I beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God." (Eph. 4:1)

WHAT WILL BE YOUR ANSWER TO THE CALL OF OUR KING?

Consider the Cost. Yet, before we answer "yes" to the call, we are told to "consider the cost." The cost of discipleship is different than the cost of salvation. Salvation is a free gift to those who believe. (see John 3:16) Discipleship is an option, "*If you want to be my follower....*" (Luke 14:26, see also Oswald, *My Utmost for His Highest*, Feb. 2) For this decision, we are asked to consider the cost before we confront the overwhelming odds of War that we will face.

Salvation is free, but "you cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me. *But don't begin until you count the cost...* What King would ever dream of going to war without first sitting down with his counselors and discussing whether his army of ten thousand is strong enough to defeat the twenty thousand soldiers who are marching against him? If he is not able, then while the enemy is still far away, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace. *So no one can become my disciple without giving up everything for me.*" (Luke 14:27-28, 31-33 NLT)

So to join Christ's Army, one must be willing give up everything - total surrender - **NO MATTER THE COST!** This War will not end by "negotiating" with the enemy. There will be no settlement and no compromise. Good and evil will not co-exist under a treaty. This "Great War" will end with absolute

victory over evil.

The Bible teaches that few will have the courage to say "Yes" to the call of our King: "The gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a *few* ever find it." (Math. 7:14 NLT) "The harvest is so great, but the workers are so *few*." (Math. 9:37 NLT) The "few" who join this army are choosing the narrow road and the hard path of life - for it is a battle! And our King will ask more from us than we think is humanly possible - because our mission will not be "humanly" possible. To survive, we will have to give up control and allow God to have victory through us.

Our generation is receiving a call to arms - to take up our swords for Him. Jesus says, "if you don't have a sword, sell your clothes and buy one! For the time has come for this prophecy about me to be fulfilled." (Luke 22: 36)

"If you maintain [your personal relationship to your personal Redeemer and Lord] at all costs, letting everything else go, God will fulfill His purpose through your life. One individual life may be of priceless value to God's purposes, and yours may be that life." Oswald, My Utmost, Nov. 30

The Rewards to those who say "Yes" to the Call. Christ our King desires that we follow Him into battle and live out the unique and noble causes for which we each have been created - and then ultimately to receive the eternal rewards, honor, and glory that He has promised. What rewards? How about "true life," "honor from God the Father," "great glory that will last forever," "a share in all the treasures God gives Christ," "living happily no matter the circumstances," and "overwhelming victory." Could this be true? Well, that's exactly what the Bible teaches. God has a good and glorious plan for your life. He wants you to remove your dirty clothes, to stop eating the food of pigs, and to put on the robe and ring of royalty. He wants you to embrace your true name and heritage. So, you see, there is something good in this life - and it's worth fighting for!

THE ARMY OF CHRIST

"Straight forward they march, never breaking rank. They never jostle each other; each moves in exactly the right place. They lunge through the gaps, and no weapon can stop them.... The earth quakes as they advance, and the heavens tremble. The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars no longer shine. The Lord leads them with a shout! This is his mighty army, and they follow his orders." (Joel 2:7-11)

"Not very often, but every once in a while, God brings us to a major turning point - a great crossroads in our life. From that point we either go toward a more and slower, lazy, and useless Christian life or we become more and more on fire, giving our utmost for His highest - our best for His glory."

(Oswald, My Utmost, Dec. 27)

The Courage to Join a "no matter the cost" Army. God is in the process of rising up an army - those people pledging their allegiance to Him - *no matter the cost*. There is no commitment that takes greater courage. For what will our God ask of us? What will it take to defeat sin's dominance of our lives, to become holy, and to fulfill our God-given purpose? It takes courage to pray, for instance, "Dear God help me to love my wife and children well - no matter the cost." "Help me to get out of my sexual, alcohol, or drug addiction, no matter the cost." "Help me to trust you with this broken relationship - no matter the cost." "Help me to trust you and not my finances - no matter the cost." "Help me to trust you in the midst of my physical or emotional handicap and pain - no matter the cost." "Help me to trust and follow you - no matter my circumstances." "Dear God, help me to be more like Christ - no matter the cost." The list goes on.... What type of "thorn in the flesh" might God ask us to endure so that, like Paul, He can be strong and victorious in our weakness?

Of course we will pray to God and "beg" Him to remove our thorns, but we may hear in response, "My gracious favor is all you need. My power works best in your weakness." (2 Cor. 12:8-9) But God will not ask us to carry any more of a burden than is necessary for us to live out the purpose for which we were created. And there is no need to fear because our King promises us that He will give us His "gracious favor" when needed. He also promises that we will never be alone: "And be sure of this, *I am with you always*, even to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:20) With such power by our side, what enemy can stop this army? "For even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away." (Rom 8:38) We must trust God that He really does have our best interests at heart - that He is good! For He is a God of absolute love - He is love. *Are you ready to surrender to the love of Christ?*

Core Battle of the War. This "no matter the cost" decision - i.e. *Surrendering our desire for control and abandoning ourselves to the will of God* is the core battle of the war. Our self-obsession must die! Our God-obsession must grow! Christ is calling us to become his brothers by surrendering to the will of the Father. *Jesus says, "Anyone who does God's will is my brother."* (Mark 3:35) Christ modeled absolute surrender to us by his death on the cross. To be Christ's brother, we are being asked to take up our cross *daily* and follow Him - even unto death - so that we can be raised up to true life with Him. (see Luke 9:23-24) This is an act of *daily* surrender, because the Enemy consistently and patiently will tempt our sinful nature to question God's goodness, to take back control of our lives, and to try to live life our own way. We understand that engaging in this war in order to be transformed over time into a true brother of Christ is the narrow path and the hard road, and few will say "Yes." Such a decision takes great resolve! Yet by trusting in God's good plan for our lives at the very core of our soul and by being obedient to our King, our wounds, scars, and suffering will not be in vain.

Commissioned into an Army of Overcomers. Christ's disciples are under a new covenant with God because of the sacrifice by Jesus on the cross. As a result, we can be overcomers - living for a noble cause, fighting for each others' lives and legacies, and experiencing true freedom - the freedom to love! *"He has commissioned us, and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment of everything he will give us."* (2 Cor. 1:21-22) Wounds and scars from past relationships, addictive behaviors, and the hardships of life tempt us to give up. But as we engage in the battle we are exhorted to "Be courageous - Be strong" because we are not alone! Sin and our difficult and painful circumstances will not defeat us. When we get knocked down by the darkness, we always will get back up and move towards the light. Because once we have tasted His goodness - nothing else satisfies.

In the end, Revelation teaches that *"The Saints overcame the accuser...!"* Evil will be defeated, and the Saints are being called upon to be a part of the victory celebration. The Saints are those true disciples who have answered the call to surrender their lives to Christ the King and are committed to His service. "Consecration (being dedicated to God's service) is our part; sanctification (being set apart from sin and being made holy) is God's part." (Oswald, Nov. 27) We now are being called to do our part by saying "yes" to the call to be His disciple.

A grass-roots movement and revolution have begun! The ***Band of Brothers*** do not want to miss out on the life, legacy, and eternal rewards that will echo throughout eternity. There will be hardships and suffering, but this is one War for which each of us was uniquely created to engage. ***"We few, we happy few, we Band of Brothers"*** have the courage to say "yes" to the call of our King - *no matter the cost* - and to be true followers of Christ. It is "for such a time as this" that men will wield their swords and engage in the causes of Christ! These are important days. God is in the process of rising up an army, and there is an incredible opportunity that is unique to our generation! The final days are fast approaching! We are all being called to take our rightful places in the larger story, to be brothers of Christ, and to be sold out to the will of our King. God, the angels in heaven, a cloud of witnesses, and all of eternity are waiting for your answer! **So "what say you?"**

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve..." (Joshua 24:15 KJV)