

Open: Hymn 171, first two verses. Alt - Hymn 44

## Military Training

TEN-HUT!

Today I have the distinct pleasure of addressing a group of the most elite military trainees ever known. As you are well aware, this is **not** basic training. You all got your basic training prior to enlisting in this elite group. Within this elite group of trainees there will be those of you who survive and those who do not. Of those who survive, a few will be heroes.

Brethren, I have not been in this world's military service, I know of few who call themselves Bible students who have been, but brethren, we are at war! We are in the midst of the battle! What I have to tell you are not pretty words of comfort; what I have to tell you may help to save your life! We are engaged in a battle which has been raging for over 6000 years and is almost over. We are among the last few soldiers to engage in this battle. The victory of the war is assured; the victory of this elite force is assured; your individual victory is not assured. It is my duty and responsibility to assist in your instruction to assure your victory and mine.

Let me explain that. Within any group of trainees, sub-groups are divided to make training more manageable. Within each of these sub-groups, or squads as they are known, are squad leaders. Squad leaders are also trainees but they may have special skills or abilities in training others. Squad leaders do not appoint themselves but are appointed by those higher in command, or in our case, squad leaders are elected to serve in that function. Those squad leaders we know as elders. Again, they, too, are trainees. Our squads we refer to as ecclesias.

As an elder, it is my duty and responsibility to assist in your training, and to give warning of the enemy. If I do not do so, my own life is at stake. Ezekiel 33:2-7 tells us: *"Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman; and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people; then if any one who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and*

*the sword comes, and takes any one of them; that man is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand. "So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.*

Ezekiel 33:2-7. Where did that come from? Brethren, we have a training manual. But it is more than just a training manual, it is the set of rules and regulations by which we are to live. What's more, it has the battle plans for our fight against the enemy. This is the same training manual we had when we were in basic training. This manual, the Bible, is widely accessible to all – even the enemy has it. But as with any military document, there are codes, and not all who read this manual have the code which reveals the hidden secrets contained within. So we have been issued code books – you know them as the Studies in the Scriptures. But even these code books are available to all – if they would read them. Some who read them, still do not understand the code. So, how do we understand this code? When we enlisted, we were given the special power of the Holy Spirit of God to aid us in that understanding. This power is not possessed by any except those of the elite trainees. Unfortunately, there are some who choose to ignore parts of this code book, and even replace some parts with codes of their own design. Brethren, if you do not use the codes given, ALL THE CODES GIVEN, you do not get complete and accurate information.

When we consecrate our lives to our Lord, we join this special unit. We are provided with all of the necessities. This is promised in Philippians 4:19 *But my God shall supply all -- all -- your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.* What commander would not supply His troops with those necessities. In an earthly army, a soldier would be supplied with food, shelter, clothing, a bed, weapons, and training. Our commander supplies each and every need that we have, both temporal and spiritual.

Now consider the following: Imagine the response of the commander of an earthly army when a recruit comes to him and says, “when I signed up, I didn't know it would be so difficult. I would like shorter days and a softer bed.” – or – “My uniform is just like everyone else's, I would like a little color in mine, perhaps some bright reds and yellows.” – or – “I'm tired of this old Army food, how about some nice steaks, a Bar-B-Que would be nice.” Or, how would the commander react to: “I'm tired of all this training, can I take the weekend off?” – or , “I'm tired of all this fighting and the battle, can I go home now?”

Better yet, let's take some actual historic comments: “We are tired of all this Manna - can't we have some meat to eat?” Why did you take us out of Egypt to come out here in the desert to die? - at least we had onions and garlic to flavor our food in Egypt.” “We want

water!” And then to top it off, they built a golden calf and declared that THIS is the god which brought them out of Egypt.

Brethren, consider ourselves! How often do we grumble before the Lord? Is this very room too hot or cold? Are the seats too hard or soft? What - is there no apple juice for refreshments? Did the one sitting next to me sing too loud, and off key? “As soon as I get home I have to read the paper, watch TV, and think about work next week! How was convention? - Oh, there were some people I hadn’t seen in a while; the speakers gave some discourses but I can’t remember what they were about; I’m just glad to be home.” “I wish I had a better job, and I need a new car, my spouse is mad at me, and the kids are out of control. I’d like to study for class, but there just isn’t any time!” “I’d like to go to the meeting, but I have too many earthly obligations.”

Brethren, we are consecrated! We cannot fight a battle sitting in our livingroom watching TV! How many earthly soldiers fight sitting at home? How many of our battles are won when our focus is on the pleasures of an earthly home? Brethren, when we consecrated, we gave up ALL! -- ALL! When a person joins an earthly army, he realizes that he may give his very life for that army and for what that army fights for. When we consecrated, when we symbolized that consecration in immersion in water, we demonstrated to the Lord and our brethren that we were already dead! Now tell me – just what does a dead man own? What rights does a dead man have?

Did we give up sin? We cannot give up that which is not ours. We never had a right to sin. What did we give up? Our homes? Our jobs? Our lifestyle? Our families? Our rights? Our own earthly life-rights? Matthew 19:27-29 tells us: *Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, **for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*** Would we expect our commanding officer to ask us to do that which he would not do? *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. (Matthew 10:24 KJV) – And – And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. (Matthew 8:20 KJV).*

Please note: With any soldier, food, clothing, and shelter are still important; but in the battle they are not the primary concern. The commander’s job is to assure that these are

provided, we have other duties. The soldier must eat what he can where he can, he does not have the luxury of a leisurely meal in comfort. The same for the other necessities of life.

Think about one more aspect – decision making. How many commanding officers ask their soldiers what, in their opinion should they do? How many soldiers would make the battle plans? How often do we as consecrated soldiers say with our lips, “Thy will be done” then suggest to our Lord what his will should be, or simply ignore Him and do what we want? Our only responsibility is to determine the Lord’s will and to do it. We are not to argue with God, we are not to critique His Divine plan, we are only to obey without question. Obey.

Consider now our training: What are we to learn? If we are to fight an enemy we must know who that enemy is, and what weapons and armor he uses. We must know ourselves and what weapons and armor we can use. We must know our part of the battle plan.

So who is our enemy? Pastor Russell identified our enemy as being three: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Scriptural support (and there is much) could be: James 4:4 “*know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*” (Romans 7:18 KJV) “*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*” (Ephesians 6:12 KJV) “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*”

During World War 2, the Allied forces fought on two fronts, the German armies and the Japanese armies. Those two forces were not necessarily friends, and had they won the war, probably would have fought each other; but for the purpose of conquering the Allied forces, they fought at the same time. The same with our enemy – the three forces, world, flesh, devil – may not agree together, but they have a common interest in defeating God’s plan. Just two Scriptures to support this: *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.* (1 John 2:16 KJV)

*And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.* (1 John 4:3 KJV)

As an aside, the greatest commanding officers are those who have worked their way up the ranks, those who have proved themselves in battle. How about our commander?

Think about his battles and his victories: (Matthew 4:1-11 KJV) *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

Throughout history, battles have always had rules. It does not make sense, but they do. The Old Testament tells us that the Hebrew nations were told by God how to treat the enemy after it was conquered – whether to kill all the people and even all the animals, or just the rulers – whatever. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, these “civilized” rules came to a climax with the development of firearms – the old single-shot rifles and pistols. The opposing armies would form two lines – one kneeling, the other standing behind – facing each other. At a signal they would then fire at each other. This was the downfall of the British army in our American history when they fought American troops and Indians. The colonists had learned from the Indians guerilla tactics of hiding, ambush, etc. The British would line up the soldiers (dressed in bright red, no less) to shoot and there was no opposing line. Instead, there were hidden soldiers, wearing camouflage, all around picking off the enemy. What does that have to do with us? I am sure that we would like our enemy to stand still in a line so that we can easily identify them and easily pick them off. Sorry, it just doesn't happen that way. In fact, it is almost the opposite. As we strive to do our Lord's will we become easy targets for the combined enemy. Knowing this, our commander has supplied us with armour. More about our armor later.

Let us get back to identifying our enemy, it's weapons, and its armor.

The world. The world is defined as the social and political systems of this earth. Are these necessarily bad? In the long-standing battle between Britain and Northern Ireland, who are the “bad guys”? Both sides have done good, and both sides have done evil.

There is not necessarily a “bad guy”. In fact, without such systems in place, the world would be in anarchy. And look at the wonderful organizations of this earth - those which help mankind through medical care; feeding and clothing the poor; caring for the homeless, the young, the old; saving endangered species. So why are we fighting against the world? There is nothing wrong with these organizations – or is there? Tell me – what organization, political or social, has made lasting benefit to mankind? What organization has produced eternal solutions? There ARE combined religious and governmental systems which have made such claims - but are they true? Name just one organization of this earth which has paid a ransom price for mankind and has raised him up to perfection through the restitution of all things! Jesus assures us in John 16:33 *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* And again in John 18:36 *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.* Our kingdom is not to be of this world either. Oh, the world would like nothing better than for us to join them in some political or moral cause – anything other than to serve our Lord; but there is a term for joining or aiding the enemy: TREASON! There is also a universal punishment for treason, the forfeiture of one’s life.

What would be the weapons of the world? Fear and Guilt. If we avoid or openly fight against the world, we are informed what dreadful consequences may happen - financial loss, loss of friends and family, scorn of the community. And the guilt – just how can you be so selfish as to do nothing for this great society which has given you so many of this earth’s goods? They neglect to remind you of crime, taxes, and other such “blessings” which this world has thrust upon us.

And their armor? Apathy, ignorance, tradition, and superstition. It is humorous to me to remember when I was young in the truth, and also to watch others young in the truth. We receive the sword of truth. We study it, we admire its sharp edges. We feel invincible! We take it with confidence and go out to slay the world. What happens? First we run into apathy – it is hard to find any who will listen at all – after all, it isn’t sports, or the stock market, or a political candidate, or a dirty joke. Finally we find one willing to fight with us. Certainly they are using the armor of ignorance, tradition, and superstition while we have the TRUTH! BUT - - - BUT - - - They are more practiced than we are, and for every thrust of truth, they deflect it with their armor, and if we are not careful, may cut us with their sword of half truths which may make us doubt. The result is that we come back discouraged. How could the truth fail us? It is so very plain, how could anyone not see and appreciate it? We are likely to take it personally, not realizing that *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor*

*understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. (John 12:40 KJV).*

The next enemy is our own flesh. How is it that we can fight our own flesh? Are we to neglect and abuse it? Is suicide the ultimate victory over the flesh? Literally, NO! We are to take care of our flesh, nourish it, give it rest, provide it with the necessities. What then is the answer to this great paradox? How do we slay the flesh, yet, at the same time, nourish and provide for it? Brethren, if you consider it, most of this training manual, our Bible, deals with just this subject – both historically and practically. Most of the laws given to the Jewish nation covered this. In this discourse, we have already been talking about this. The answer is in two parts: Purpose and Priorities.

The purpose of our flesh is nicely summed up in one Scripture: 1 Cor. 6: 19 “*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own;*”

Consider the shrines and temples which man has built for his various gods, including Christian church buildings. Are they not cared for with utmost respect? Is not the desecration of one of these buildings the greatest crime in their religion? Should we not, then, lavish our own bodies with all the desires which it has?

That is where Priorities comes in. Look at the last phrase of that Scripture: “*You are not your own.*” How many temples to Buddha do you decorate with flowers? To which Synagogue do you donate your golden menorahs? For which Catholic church have you made stained glass windows? You are not your own! It is not your job to give your temple, your body, all the comfort and beauty which it desires. Your job is to maintain it and keep it clean.

That leads us to the identification of the weapons and armor of this fleshly enemy. How many earthly, man-made temples have a mind or will of their own. None. They are made of stone and wood and metal. They have no feelings, no desires. Oh, but ours - - - ours are sensual. They have legitimate needs. But they have desires above those needs. Our flesh **cannot be satisfied!** We have heard of those who are addicted to certain drugs who must have increasingly larger doses of those drugs to produce the same satisfaction derived. Brethren, our bodies are like that in all areas! Is a piece of chocolate good?, then a pound is better! Do we need a car for transportation? Then it must be the latest and greatest!

And here is where the flesh wars against the Spirit. Again, our Scripture: 1 Cor. 6: 19  
*“Do you not know that your body is a temple **of the Holy Spirit within you**, which you have from God? You are not your own;”* The Holy Spirit of God which dwells within you. Your new nature, your new will, your new mind.

Consider again this need for transportation. I am just using this only as an example, I am making no judgement on any who are going through this process or have done so because each person has individual needs with many variables - this is only an example of how the flesh may operate. I have need of basic transportation. For my situation, public transportation is not an option. Other variables rule out other forms of transportation such as bicycles - I need a car. It is not a requirement of my employment to have a fancy car to impress clients - I just need basic transportation. My options are an older used car or a new car. Can we all relate to this? We know the arguments on both sides, don't we? When you buy a used car, you buy someone else's discard with all its problems, it may need constant repair. But this may be offset considering the cost of a new car, its depreciation, higher insurance costs, higher payments, etc. But what does the flesh do? It uses all its weapons against the spirit. It tries to persuade us with **vanity**, with **jealousy**, with **pride**. And not necessarily for the new car. Maybe the old car is a beautiful classic 1955 T-Bird that I have always wanted. After all, it only needs a new motor, transmission, steering, brakes, upholstery, and some body work - uh - \$20,000 should get it into shape. But then I would have my old reliable transportation - right? Oh, the **deceitfulness** of the flesh!

Television commercials tell us that we deserve the very best. And our flesh tries to convince us that this is true, especially since we are God's chosen people. We should have the finest, the best - - - uh - - didn't we just go over this? Or, have we already forgotten what was said?

So, we go out to slay the desires of the flesh so as to gain our victory. We take our sword of truth and strike! OUCH! That hurt! Look, I'm wounded, I'm bleeding. Do you have a bandage? Where is the shield – the armor – of the flesh? Funny, we just saw it. Part of our training is to become sympathetic high priests. Our deceitful flesh uses this for its own shield and armor. Where is the sympathy for our own flesh? Remember, we are not to wound our fleshly desires then heal them. We are to slay our fleshly desires! Is this easy? Consider the Apostle Paul – was it easy for him? If you have not recently read what he has to say on the subject, I urge you to do so. The references are too numerous to list here. Part of our military training is to learn to identify the spies and traitors within our ranks - and our very own flesh is that spy and traitor. We don't need to look at our brother, we need to look in the mirror.



Our third enemy is Satan. We see pictures depicting him as a fellow with horns and a pitchfork. DO NO BE DECEIVED! Satan is one of the most powerful beings in existence! Remember that he was one of the first created beings and was no doubt instrumental in the creation of much of the universe. He was an angelic leader. When he fell he brought many of the other heavenly angels with him. No earthly human being can stand up to him. Therefore, how could it be possible for us to overcome him? Brethren, you have just seen Satan's two most devastating weapons: Deceit and Discouragement!

Deceit is lying, or presenting the truth – or partial truth – in such a way as to cause the listener to believe the lie. This is Satan's character. John 8:44 tell us: *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”* Satan is a powerful being which no earthly human being can withstand. BUT – what Satan wants us to forget is that we are Spirit begotten new creatures. We have access to the most powerful force there is – a force far more powerful than Satan's power! All we have to do is A S K . Matthew 7:7 – Ask, Seek, Knock. Why? *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12 KJV)*

How about Satan's armor? What possible armor would he need against us? And what possible armor could he ever use as defense against God? His greatest defense is the same as his greatest weapons, deceit and discouragement. *And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14 KJV)*

Now, brethren, what about us? What about our training? What about our armor? What about our weapons? What has our Commander supplied, and how will we use those resources?

We have already discussed our training manual, the Bible. But there is more! Our training manual is MAGIC! For contained therein, is our armor, our weapon, in fact, all our supplies and resources. Once again, *my God shall supply all -- **all** -- your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.* Even our very food and drink? *But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. (John 4:32 KJV)* and *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water*

*that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:13,14 KJV)*

What about our weapons? Do we wage war on our enemies with guns and knives and bombs? No, *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. (2 Corinthians 10:4 KJV)*

And our armor? Brethren, who of us has not studied this armor as brought to us in Ephesians 6? As review, let us read those words from our training manual: *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the **whole** armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: **Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit**, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (Ephesians 6:10-18 KJV)*

***Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.*** Brethren, no matter how well trained and well equipped a soldier is, he cannot fight alone! *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25 KJV)* We must fight together, but most important, we must be in communication with our commander! He communicates to us through our training manual and our code books, the Bible and the Volumes. We must maintain our communication with him through prayer.

In any war there are casualties. Some are killed and some are captured. Some are killed by the world, the flesh, or the devil. They forsake their consecration and return to their former ways. Some are, for a time, captured by these enemies, but eventually make good their escape. *These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14 KJV)* There are also the true heroes, 144,000 of them. *These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the*

*Lamb. (Revelation 14:4 KJV).* Unfortunately, brethren, in any war, there are also those killed or injured by what is termed “friendly fire”. Those killed or injured by their own troops. One of our greatest concerns should be that we not injure our fellow soldiers of the cross – especially intentionally.

I wish time allowed us here to study in detail each piece of our armor, our sword and how to use it, and the entire subject of prayer. It does not, so I can only exhort you to rise from your beds of ease and to study diligently, and to put into practice each day on the battlefield that which you have studied. We cannot put this off until tomorrow; we cannot put this off until we have “time” to do so! This must be our first priority. *But seek ye **first** the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33 KJV)*

*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12 KJV)*  
 May you all die fighting, and may you all be able to say, “*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*” (2 Timothy 4:7 KJV).

Close: Hymn 171, last two verses.