

## The Christian and Civil Government (9<sup>th</sup>)

(Today we will continue our study of Luke 3:14 and the overview of a Christian soldier along with the role of the Christian and civil government.)

We closed our last podcast while studying Luke 3:14 and the answer John gave to inquiring soldiers that went to him for baptism and fruits of repentance. In answer to their question, John told them that three things were required: (1) Do violence to no man; (2) do not accuse any falsely; and, (3) be content with their wages. We discussed the first two, and now we will take up the third: be content with their wages.

It is not uncommon to hear of someone, whatever his occupation, complain that his wages should be more than what is given, and that of a soldier is of no difference. In fact, often it is reported that the pay for those in military service should be more than what is given. Nevertheless, here we find that John told the soldiers to be content with that given to them for wages. The Greek word for content carries the idea of being *enough*, or *sufficient*. It is only used eight times in the New Testament and translated as sufficient in II Corinthians 12:9 where the Lord told Paul that His grace was sufficient for him to endure the thorn in the flesh. It is also used in I Timothy 6:8 and Hebrews 13:5 where we are instructed by the Lord to be *content* with “food and raiment,” and not to be covetous but to be *content* “with such things as” we have. The soldiers were to be satisfied with their wages. The word for *wages* originally meant anything that was cooked or bought. Therefore, anything given to the soldier which might include not only money but also the food given to them for their service. I have not been in military service, but I cannot remember talking to anyone who was in the service that spoke of the food as being satisfactory, especially rations given to them in the field. This is no small thing for anyone, but how much more when we consider this requirement for a soldier. From this alone, we see that the idea of a Christian soldier is not that of a complainer or one that is continually dissatisfied with not only his wages or life in general as a soldier.

Allow me to digress somewhat from the specific theme of the lesson and discuss what a Christian soldier should be. Obviously, the overall lifestyle of a Christian should be the same for anyone regardless of his occupation or position in life. The Scriptures do not teach a special set of rules for some people different from that of other Christians. Modern propaganda via the media, particularly in movies and other like entertainments depicts a good soldier as one who is macho and aggressive. He is often one who uses all kinds of filthy language and often takes the name of God in vain. It is not uncommon for professing Christians to talk about going to such movies and speaking of them in a positive manner. Some may mention that such a movie has some “bad” language, but not too much. My question is how can any Christian be content to be entertained with such filth and other speech that takes the name of God in vain? I even see professing Christians “liking” various posts posted by people in the military with such language. Yes, we live in a real world, but a Christian is not of the world, John 17:14-16.

The Christian soldier who goes on leave does not seek out the saloons and other like establishments for the purpose of drunken entertainment, nor does he search for women to take advantage of them. He desires to treat women “as sisters, with all purity,” I Timothy 5:2. Hardly, do we see role models of the Christian soldier as Robert E. Lee or Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall” Jackson be set forth today in any way. For those who would say that was a different generation and we live in different times. I remind you again, the standard for a Christian is the same in every age. However, I would like to give some modern examples of being a Christian soldier.

One dear brother was oddly drafted into the Navy years ago and the ship to which he was assigned was a place of sore trials. To his knowledge, he was the only person on the ship that had any desires to

love and serve the Lord. He was given an exceeding hard time and on the Lord's Day he would go to the bow of the ship alone with his Bible and song book and worship the Lord. When his last day arrived and he was walking off the ship and was on the gangway when he said the meanest and most vile man on the ship called out to him and asked him to stop for a minute. He said the man called him by name and said that "they had given him hell" all the time he was on the ship, but that every man on the ship respected him because of his Christian consistency. This dear brother said that that one thing was worth all the bad things he endured as a soldier.

Another example is a dear brother who was drafted into the Vietnam War. While there it was a custom that on Friday a tub of beer on ice was given to the soldiers. However, he and one other soldier refused to partake of the riotous activities, and after a few times, there were some Pepsis included for them. This dear brother said that the Lord blessed him to be able to comfort other soldiers who were enduring hard times because of his Christianity testimony. In fact, one of his superior officers told him that he was one SOB that had not changed. I call this a compliment received through the back door.

Another dear brother I know not only served in the Vietnam War, but later served as a drill sergeant in the army reserves. He did not use curse words or other filthy language when drilling and instructing his recruits. On one occasion there was a dispute between him and another instructor regarding proper language of an officer. It was settled when their superior officer affirmed that the rules and regulations for officers was that they were not to use such language to their soldiers. Eventually, this Christian brother won the Drill Sergeant of the Year for the reserves during competitions at Fort Monroe, VA. One of the honors for this was an invitation to the Pentagon and a tour through it with his family. I asked this dear brother one time if he thought it was more difficult living as a Christian in the military. He said that he thought it was no more difficult than living in any other area of life, and this is the same testimony of the previous brother mentioned. However, today with a lot of changes and pressure by certain "special interest groups" that may be changing. It is reported more and more lately where Christians are being forbidden to express their faith not only in the military but also in society in general. There may well come a day in this country where laws are made against Christianity. Unless the Rules and Regulations for the Army have changed, their laws definitely rule against unwholesome and demeaning words used by the officers against those under them.

Regardless of this, while a Christian may lawfully serve as a soldier, as previously stated, he is to live a godly and holy life in that environment. My question is, "Why would a young Christian man desire to join himself to an organization where there is an abundance of profane language and riotous living?" Patriotism is one thing, but actively placing one's self into a wicked environment is something different. It is one thing to be drafted into the service by the government but entirely something different to actively put one's self in such an atmosphere when our homeland is not being invaded. Indeed much more could be written regarding this topic, as well as the motive and cause of just wars. The law of this country, the United States of America, is the Constitution and unless we follow the rules and regulations for entering into a war as set by the Constitution for this nation we are in violation of the law. Nevertheless, let us return to the Scriptures.

Luke 3:14 is not the only place where there is support for a Christian being a soldier. Cornelius, was a centurion living in the town of Caesarea. The Scriptures describe him as "A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway," Acts 10:1-2. In fact, in verse twenty-two, the Word of God describes him also as a just man, and in verse thirty we find him to be fasting and praying to the true God of heaven and earth. Cornelius was such an individual that an angel of the Lord (Acts 10:3) appeared unto him and directed him to send to Joppa for Simon Peter. This was unusual because in the history of the Scriptures, angels did not appear to Gentiles but only with the Jewish people. Peter preached to Cornelius and there is not a hint that he should cease being a soldier. Clearly Cornelius was a repentant believer (cf. Acts 11:17-18). Also, there was other

centurion in the Bible that is mentioned who appears to have faith in Christ and he was not instructed to cease being a soldier; in fact, our Lord commended him for his great faith. (See Matthew 8:5-13.)

We will close our study for today. The Lord willing, we plan to continue reviewing the scriptural references as given in the confessions in our next study.