

PRAY FOR OUR SOLDIERS

Hardly an assembly passes that we hear prayers for our servicemen and women presently serving in danger combat regions around the world. Since September 11, 2001 and the United States military response, we have been acutely aware of the dangers being faced by these brave men and women. It is right and good that we are asking for their safe and rapid return to their families.

Heard frequently, but less often I am afraid, is a prayer for the “other” soldiers; the men and women serving God in mission points throughout the world. Can we agree that these deserve our fervent prayers too? Please read on as we offer three compelling reasons why we ought to bring these people before God’s throne.

God’s soldiers are doing God’s work. The missionary zeal of Jesus is seen first in his own life. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea (Matthew 2:1) but was raised in Nazareth (Matthew 2:23). As he began his personal ministry Jesus moved again, this time to the northern province of Galilee where he settled in Capernaum (Matthew 4:13). From here, Jesus would preach and teach throughout the regions of Palestine (Matthew 9:35-38). As his work gained momentum, Jesus selected twelve men called Apostles who would be his closest allies in preaching of the coming kingdom. Jesus would also select 70 disciples who were sent forth in 35 teams to preach throughout the Jewish world. These, like the Apostles, were specifically empowered to do miracles thus confirming their words (Luke 10:1 ff). After Peter opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles (Acts 10), Paul would become an untiring missionary who traveled through virtually all of the Roman Empire teaching the Gospel.

Today, hundreds of men and women follow in the same paths, proclaiming the truth to those who have never heard. In the first century, missionaries were empowered with a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit. Today, like us, they are equipped with the power of prayer. Let us use prayer to help further their work which is, actually, the work of God.

God’s soldiers are doing our work. Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15 commission us all to go and preach the Gospel. Of course, not everyone can possibly leave their homes for the mission field. But through our support of our soldiers, we share in their successes. We place great emphasis on funding missionaries who come our way and well we should, but greater still is to pray daily for their safety, opportunities and success. Just as the U.S. Military is fighting our battles, the missionaries of the Lord’s church are fighting for the souls of men.

God’s soldiers are facing terrible hardships. I know of no mission field which is as comfortable and soft as our own country. Brethren brave extreme cold weather and extreme hot weather without the usual convenience of central heat and air conditioning. They eat food which is not as good, perhaps not even safe to eat. Many must face bandits and government sanctioned corruption each day. In some regions, missionaries are facing dangerous animals and the threat of terrible disease. I recall one missionary reporting finding a cobra *inside* his home. Sadly, in some areas of India and Southeast Asia, our brethren face imprisonment or death for converting and baptizing men and women. Four

times in the Gospels, Jesus warns that his people “*will be hated*” because of their work (Matthew 10:22; 24:9; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:17).

Our military soldiers are equipped with bullet-proof flak jackets, Kevlar lined helmets and armored vehicles. Not so for the Lord’s army. Equipped with little more than a Bible in their hand, these men and women have virtually no protection as they spread the Gospel.

Please pray for the safety of our military service people, but even more, pray for our missionaries who labor hard and long in distant lands.

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