THE CHURCH—THE ARMY OF CHRIST

Intro: The church is referred to by many differing figures (a bride, a household, a family, the body of Christ, etc.). In this lesson let us notice the church is the army of Christ.

I. SOME ERRONEOUS VIEWS OF THE CHURCH.

A. Social club view.
   1. These view the church only as a club by which to make social contacts.
   2. The church does have social value as it is God’s society of mutual love and edification, but it is not a social club.

B. Humanly-originated institution.
   1. Some contend that the Bible is nothing more than a human production.
   2. Thus they perceive the church to be a human institution, not from God.
   3. The church is of divine origin.
      a. The Bible is the word of God, not man.
         (1) 2 Tim. 3:16-17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”
         (2) 2 Pet. 1:20-21 “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”
      b. The Bible clearly indicates that the church is from God.
         (1) Eph. 3:10-11 “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:”
         (2) Acts 2

C. Comprised of a large number of denominations.
   1. Those who hold this view agree on the following.
      a. One can be saved without being a member of the church.
      b. One denomination is as good as another.
      c. The Lord’s church is nothing more than a denomination.
   2. What is a denomination?
      a. Someone has said, “A denomination is a religious body with extra-Biblical peculiarities distinguishing it from the church or religious body revealed in the Bible. It is utterly impossible for any denomination to exist without believing something, doing something, being something, saying something, or having something that is not in the Word of God. All denominations teach more or less of what is in the Bible; but the things they teach that are in the Bible do not make them denominations.”
      b. In Webster’s New American Dictionary among the definitions is “a sect.” Thus, a faction or heresy.
         (1) Gal. 5:20 “Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditious, heresies,”
         (2) 2 Pet. 2:1 “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”
   3. The church is not a denomination or sect.
4. Only those who are members of the Lord’s church can be saved.
   a. Eph. 5:23 “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”
   b. Acts 2:47 “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

D. A Social institution.
1. These view the church as an organization to right the wrongs of society.
   a. Their main concern is with the economically depressed, pollution (air, water, etc.), government, arms race, discrimination, etc.
   b. Milder forms of this are seen in the Lord’s church today.
      (1) We hear churches whose aim is to “meet the needs of the people.”
      (2) They provide seminars for “financial planning,” “Job search,” “Depression,” “How To Cope With Aging,” “Alcoholism,” “Dealing With Death,” etc.
      (3) They are the congregations who will build gymnasiums or family life centers, provide entertainment for the young people, etc.
2. The church’s work is spiritual, not physical.
   a. 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.”
   b. We deal in saving souls; Luke 19:10 “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

II. THE CHURCH IS A DIVINE INSTITUTION AND IS THE ARMY OF CHRIST.
A. The basic function of an army is to fight.
B. The marching orders of the church are clearly set forth in the Bible.
   1. 1 Tim. 6:12 “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.”
   2. 2 Tim. 4:7 “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:”
   3. Jude 3 “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”
   4. 1 Tim. 1:18 “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;”
   5. 2 Tim. 2:3 “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”
C. In the remainder of this study we will notice the marks of a good soldier and the marks of a good army.
   1. The Bible refers to individual Christians as soldiers (2 Tim. 2:3).
   2. The Bible also refers to the church as an army (Rev. 19:14-16 “And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”).
   3. We should profit from this comparison, for there are characteristic principles that Christians and the church should possess.
III. Marks of a Great Soldier.

A. One must be in an army.

1. While one could perform some of the functions of a soldier without being in an army, the usual connotation of the word, such would not be the case.
   a. He might do many things a soldier would do and do them well.
   b. But, one cannot be a great soldier without being in the army, part of the team.
   c. It takes great teamwork to accomplish great things in warfare.

2. Christians, to be great soldiers must fight together, not against each other.
   a. 1 Cor. 3:9 “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.”
   b. 2 Cor. 6:1 “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”
   c. This speaks to the unity the church is to have.
      (1) John 17:20-21 “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”
      (2) 1 Cor. 1:10 “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”
   d. The only exception to this is one who becomes a traitor, teaches false doctrine.
      (1) We cannot work with or aid that person.
      (2) Rom. 16:17-18 “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”

B. One must be in the right army.

1. It is not enough to be in an army, it must be the right army.
2. There are many zealous people who think they are in Christ’s army, when actually they are in the devil’s army.
   a. 2 Cor. 11:13-15 “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”
   b. Acts 20:29-31 “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

3. To be in the right army one must be in the army of Christ.
   a. To be in the army of Christ, he must have obeyed the gospel.
   b. To be in the army of Christ he must be living faithfully.

C. One must wear the right uniform.

1. When soldiers leave the barracks, they must be in uniform, the right uniform. It is a court-martial offense to be out of uniform during wartime.
2. The soldier in the church is always under marching orders.
   a. 1 Tim. 6:12 “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.”
b. 2 Tim. 1:18 “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;”

3. What is the Christians uniform?
   a. It is putting on Christ.
   (1) Gal. 3:27 “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
   (2) Rom. 13:14 “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”
   (3) This means to walk, live, according to the example of Christ.
   b. He must put on righteousness.
   (1) Eph. 4:24 “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”
   (2) Phi. 1:11 “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”
   c. It is to so live that his life reflects the principles of the gospel of Christ; Phi. 1:27 “Only let your conversation be as it become the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;”
   d. Eph. 6:10-18 “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;”

D. One must be properly trained to do his job.
1. When one enters the military:
   a. he is sent to basic training.
   (1) This is where they learn the fundamentals that all soldiers must know.
   (2) This is a period of intensive training.
   b. After basic training there are specialized schools to learn specific jobs.
2. When one becomes a Christian he must be trained well.
   a. Ours is a spiritual warfare with just one weapon.
   (1) Eph. 6:17 “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:”
   (2) We must use the Bible, anything else is folly.
   b. We must be properly trained to wield this spiritual sword.
   (1) It is a mighty weapon;
   (a) Heb. 4:12 “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
   (b) 2 Cor. 10:3-4 “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)”
(2) What type of soldier would a man be if he only had one weapon and did not know how to use that weapon well?

c. This training comes from a study of the scriptures; 2 Tim. 2:15 “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

E. **One must go to the frontline of the battle.**

1. How can one be a great soldier if he never goes to the battlefield and fights.
2. We as Christians must be on the frontlines of the battle against Satan.
   a. We need elders who demand strong, bold preaching of the truth.
   b. We need preachers who will not shun to declare all the council of God with boldness.
      (1) Acts 20:27 “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”
      (2) Acts 4:29 “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,”
      (3) We need members who will be supportive of gospel preachers and out teaching others the truth.

F. **One must be obedient to the orders of his commander.**

1. In an army a soldier must obey his superior.
   a. He must obey without question.
   b. He must obey immediately.
2. In Christ army we must obey our Commander.
   a. We are taught to obey.
      (1) Jam. 4:7 "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
      (2) We must be taught to obey even before one is baptized. Mat. 28:19-20 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”
   b. Repentance demands:
      (1) We stop everything we are doing that is contrary to the will of Christ.
      (2) To start doing everything that we are not doing that Christ wants us to do.

IV. **MARKS OF A GREAT ARMY.**

A. **Must have a great commander-in-chief.**

1. No army can be great, without a great commander-in-chief.
2. The army of Christ has a great commander-in-chief, Jesus Christ.
   a. Mat. 28:18-20 “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”
   b. Eph. 1:20-23 “Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
c. Col. 1:18 “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”

d. Phi. 2:9-11 “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And things every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

e. Heb. 1:1-4 “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; 4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

3. The Greatness of Christ is seen in:
   a. His Birth.
   b. His Life.
   c. His Death.
   d. His Glorification.

4. Every soldier is to obey Him lovingly, zealously, without question or hesitation.

B. Must have great officers who serve under the commander-in-chief.

1. Even with a great commander-in-chief, an army cannot be truly great without great officers to command the troops.

2. The church needs great officers (elders).
   a. If the church has spiritually weak vacillating elders who are tolerant of false teaching and ungodly living, the congregation will not be great.
   b. Elders are to be directing the affairs of the church.
      (1) Acts 20:28 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
      (2) 1 Tim. 3:5 “(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)”
   c. Elders are to be shepherds guarding the flock.
      (1) Guarding from false teaching and false teachers.
         (a) Acts 20:29-31 “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”
         (b) Tit. 1:9-11 “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. 10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.”
         (c) Rom. 16:17-18 “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”
         (d) 2 The. 3:14 “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”
Providing spiritual nourishment for the flock.

(a) 1 Pet. 5:2 “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;”

(b) This includes making sure teachers in Bible Classes are teaching the truth.

(c) It includes finding a true preacher.
   i) One that will preach the truth.
   ii) Standing behind him when he does preach the truth and oppose error.

C. Must have great fighters.

1. No army can be great without great fighters within its ranks (whether they be ground, naval, or air).

2. The church needs great fighters (preaching the gospel).

3. They must tell people what they must do.
   a. Gal. 5:22-25 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”
   b. 1 Cor. 13
   c. Eph. 4:24 “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”
   d. Tit. 2:11-14 “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”
   e. 2 Pet. 1:5-7 “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make ye that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

4. They must tell people what they must not do.
   a. 1 Pet. 2:11 “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”
   b. Gal. 5:19-21 “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”
   c. Col. 3:5-9 “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6 For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. 8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”
   d. Rom. 1:18-32
e. 1 The. 5:22 “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”
5. They must also rebuke sin and false teaching and teachers.
a. In rebuking sin, doing so by name if necessary.
   (1) 2 Tim. 4:10 “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.”
   (2) 3 John 9 “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.”

b. In rebuking false teachers and their teaching again, it might be necessary to name names.
   (1) 1 Tim. 1:19-20 “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: 20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”
   (2) 2 Tim. 2:16-17 “But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. 17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; 18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”

6. 2 Tim. 4:1-5 “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

7. 1 Tim. 4:6 “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.”

D. Must have great rank-and-file soldiers to do all kinds of task.
1. While in an army the frontline soldiers get the attention, they could not do their job without the work of many others behind the scene.
2. Elders and preachers may get the “headlines” but their work could not be accomplished without the rank-and-file.
3. We must have members who are doing their work for the success of the church.
   a. Each one is important.
      (1) 1 Cor. 12:22-23 “Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.”
      (2) Eph. 4:16 “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

   b. Without these workers the church would suffer great losses.

Conclusion: Let each member of the church be a great soldier individually, and then the church collectively will be a great army.