

A SOLDIER WITH A SILVER CROSS OF CHRIST

By John F. Hall

In 1962, when I became a soldier, I was issued combat boots, uniforms, and dog tags. This story tells what I added to those dog tags. In 1762, Issac Watts wrote the hymn, "Am I a soldier of the cross." These are his lyrics: "Am I a soldier of the cross - a follower of the Lamb? And shall I fear to own His cause, or blush to speak His name? In the name, the precious name, of Him who died for me, through grace I'll win the promised crown, whatever my cross will be. Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas? And there no foes for me to face? Must I stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me on to God? Since I must fight if I would reign, increase my courage, Lord! I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy Word."



Edgar Guest wrote the poem, "See It Through." At the end of each stanza, he repeats the title of the poem. This was to call attention to his themes of courage and perseverance. These are his words: "When you're up against a trouble, meet it squarely, face to face; lift your chin and set your shoulders, plant your feet and take a brace. When it's vain to try to dodge it, do the best that you can do; you may fail, but you may conquer, see it through! Black may be the clouds above you and your future may seem grim, but don't let your nerve desert you; keep yourself in fighting trim. If the worst is bound to happen, in spite of all you can do, running from it will not save you, see it through! Even hope may seem futile, when troubles you're beset, but remember you are facing just what other men have met. You may fail, but fall still fighting; don't give up, whatever you do,; eyes front, head high to the finish. See it through."

My favorite prophet is Moses. I paid attention to his words as to how long a man might live. In the first part of Psalm, Chapter 90, Verse 10, are these words: "The years of life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty...". So, one might say that my strength has allowed me to reach the age of eighty. But Christ is in charge of my life. He will decide when he will call me home. I've tried to leave my earthly home, better than I found it. I've written hundreds of my life stories, for my family, and for my friends.

In 1871, The Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, a Roman Catholic writer and priest, wrote the hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers." These are his lyrics: "Onward Christian soldiers! Marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before. Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe; forward into battle, see His banners go! Onward Christian soldiers! With the cross of Jesus, going on before...".

“At the name of Jesus, satan’s host doth flee; on then, Christian soldiers, on to victory! Hell’s foundations quiver at the shout of praise: Brothers, lift your voices, loud your anthems raise! Like a modern army moves the church of God: Brothers, we are trending where the saints have trod; we are not divided, all one body we - are one in faith and Spirit, one eternally. Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane; but the Church of Jesus constant will remain. Gates of hell can never against the Church prevail; we have Christ’s own promise, which can never fail. Onward, then, ye people! Join our happy throng; blend with ours your voices in the triumph song. Laud and honor unto Christ, the King; this through countless ages men and angels sing.”

I started writing this story on my 8th birthday. We held a celebration, in my dining room. My son, John, caught and cooked the fish from Lake Barkley. His wife, Lori; my grandchildren, Andrea, Heather, and John-John, and my in-laws, Marsh and Roger, came. My wife, Paula, cooked the rest of the meal. I prayed the grace. Marsha and Roger gave me a crystal cross. Etched below the happy 80th birthday, were these words by Lilli Vaihere: “Behind you, all your memories, before you, all your dreams, around you, all who love you, within you, all you need.”

I remember singing the military song, “The Army Goes Rolling Along.” The original version of this song, was written in 1908 by Edmund Gruber, and was titled “The Caissons Go Rolling Along.” A few of Gruber’s lyrics were transformed into a march by John Phillip Sousa in 1917. It is played at the conclusion of every U.S. Army ceremony. These are the lyrics to that song: “March along, sing our song, with the Army of the free. Count the brave, count the true, who have fought to victory. We’re the Army and proud of our name! We’re the Army and proudly proclaim: First to fight for the right, and to build the Nation’s might, and the Army Goes Marching Along. Proud of all we’ve done, fighting till the battle’s won, and the Army Goes Rolling Along. Then it hi, hi hey! The Army on the way. Count off the cadence loud and strong; for wherever we go, you will always know that The Army Goes Rolling Along.”

I remember when I was a teenage soldier, once. And I marched with a silver cross of Christ, that was attached to my dog tag’s ball chain.

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