TITLE: It’s An Honor to Serve!

TEXT: 2Tim. 2:3-4; Ephe. 6:11-13; Josh. 1:6-9; Ps. 119:11; Josh. 24:14-15; Mt. 6:24

INTRODUCTION: In a few dats we will celebrate Veterans Day.

 I think that Veterans Day is second only to Independence Day as a national holiday.

 Veterans day, a day set aside to remember and honor those in our armed services who have fought to defend and keep secure the freedoms that we enjoy as American’s.

 I believe the true Patriots of this nation are our veterans, those who were willing to leave home and family and go and put their lives on the line for their country…

How many Veterans do we have here this morning?

(Have Raise hands--)

 This morning I would like to start out with a song that is about a veteran, one, who like most veterans, was Just an ordinary man who, when his county called, he left home and family and answered that call to serve God and country.

**(History of song)**

 Before a concert one night Ray Boltz and his band members were having devotions with a minister by the name of Rev. Wayne Francis. Rev. Francis told them about the heroic service of an American serviceman during the Vietnam War. The mans name was Jeremiah Denton Jr.

 He was shot down behind enemy lines and was held captive as a POW for 7 1/2 years where He was tortured and kept in solitary confinement. At the end of the war he was finally released and put on a plane bound for freedom.

 That plane full on POW’s landed at Clark Field in the Philippines and as he stepped from the plane these are the words that he spoke to thew crowd gathered to meet them. **“We are honored to have had the opportunity to serve our country under difficult circumstances. We are profoundly grateful to our commander-in-chief and to our nation for this day. God bless America!**

 Ray Boltz said that the account of Jeremiah Denton’s devotion to service was a tremendous inspiration for him that night and it was also the inspiration for this song….

 “An Honor to Serve- by Ray Boltz”

 A tribute to the veterans among us this morning..

*He was just a young man, When he first heard the call-*

*Come and join in the battle, Come and give us your all-*

*And he rose up to follow, Leaving all else behind-*

*And he joined in this song, When he reached the front lines-*

***(Chorus)***

*It’s an honor to serve, To join in the fight-*

*To lift up my voice, And to lay down my life-*

*Giving glory to God, Keeping none in return-*

*It’s an honor, an honor to serve.*

*Now the day he was captured, They locked him in chains-*

*And though weeks turned to years, Still his faith stayed the same-*

*As his body was broken, His dark hair turned gray-*

*But each night in his cell, He would stand up and say-*

***(Chorus)***

*Now one day the war finally came to an end-*

*He spoke with his heart as he stood with his men-*

*(Spoken)*

“We are honored to have had the opportunity to serve our country under difficult circumstances. We are profoundly grateful to our commander-in-chief and to our nation for this day…God Bless America!”

*As they lifted the flag at the front of the crowd-*

*I watched him stand up and bring his hand to his brow-*

*Oh Lord help me remember what true honor means-*

*And no matter the cost to stand up and sing….*

*(Chorus X2)*

 *It’s an honor to serve, To join in the fight-*

 *I will lift up my voice, I will lay down my life-*

*Giving glory to God, Keeping none in return-*

 *It’s an honor, an honor to serve..*

This morning I want to talk about being called into service.

 How many of you here this morning has made the decision to accept Jesus Christ to be the Lord and Savior of your life?

 Do you realize that the day that you made that decision that you answered the call of God and entered into the service of a King and of a Kingdom?

 The day that we received Christ into our life we signed up to serve a Kingdom and a King--the Kingdom of God and the King of all Kings, Jesus Christ our lord and savior?

Scripture often uses the analogy of being a Christian is like that of being a soldier…..

 **2Tim 2:3 (NIV) Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.**

4 No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer.

 **Ephe 6:11 (NIV) Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.**

**12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**

**13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.**

As Christians we are soldiers in the army of God!

We are to **Endure hardship -- like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.**

 Just as Jeremiah Denton was a good soldier in the United States Navy and endured all the hardships of being a POW for 7 ½ years—

 We are to endure the hardships of this life as a good soldier of Jesus Christ..

 We have enlisted into His service..

**No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—**(the affairs of this world) **but his desire is to please his commanding officer.**

As a Christian,Jesus is our Commander–in-Chief and it should be our top priority to obey and please Him as a soldier of the Cross.

As a soldier of the Cross, a soldier of Christ, there is a war we are to be fighting…

 **For our struggle** (battle-war) **is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**

 There is a battle raging all around each of us every day in the spiritual realm over the souls of men and we have been enlisted in Gods army to fight that battle..

 And, just like a soldier we are equipped with armor to fight these spiritual battles…

**Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand!**

 **Put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, having our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace. Then we are to take up the shield of faith with which we can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the enemy, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, and we are to arm ourselves with prayer….**

 This morning I want to look at a man from Scripture that I believe is an excellent example of what it is to be a soldier in the army of God.

That man is Joshua, the successor of Moses…

 Joshua led his life as a good soldier in the army of God.

 I love God’s pep talk to Joshua just after leadership of Israel passed to Joshua after the death of Moses…

 In it we find the secret of how to be or become a good soldier in the Army of God.

The lord says this to Joshua…

 **Josh 1:6 (NIV) "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.**

**7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.**

**8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.**

**9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."**

Do you want to know how to be a success in the army of God? What is of primary importance if we are to win the battles that God places before us? How we can find the strength and courage that we will need to prevail through the trials and tribulations and the struggles that the enemy has for us in this life?

**8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.**

 What makes us prosperous and successful as a Christian, as a soldier in the army of God, is the Word of God.

 We are to quote it, meditate upon it, and above all, be obedient to its message.

 David said it like this:

Psal 119:11 (KJS) Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

The promise if we do…..

 We will “**be prosperous and successful wherever we go.**

 Joshua found this to be true all the days of his life.

 That faithfulness and obedience to Gods Word equaled to prosperity and success. Especially spiritual prosperity and success.

 Joshua fought and won many battles in his lifetime as he led the nation of Israel into the land of promise that God had put before them.

 He was able to subdue and conquer the inhabitants of a very hostile land as he was simply faithful and obedient to Gods Word and Gods will for his life.

 Under Joshua’s leadership Israel concurred 2 kingdoms on the East Side of the Jordan River and 31 kingdoms on the West Side. Mighty fortified cities such as Jericho and AI fell before Joshua and the Israelites…

 The primary weapons of Joshua and the Israelite army where simply faith and the Word of God.

 With just a shout of faith the walls of Jericho, the greatest, mightiest, city in the land, came crashing down!

 All because of one man who knew what it meant to be a soldier in Gods army…..A man who learned how to arm himself for spiritual battles and fight against the principalities and powers and forces of evil in the heavenly realms…

 Joshua was a man who viewed his service to God, not just as an obligation, but as an honor…

 For Joshua it was an honor to serve…

 After the battles were over and Israel had rest from all their enemies around them, when Joshua is an old man, toward the end of his life he summons the people together and makes this challenge to them---and to us today….

 **Josh 24:14 (NIV) "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.**

**15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."**

Joshua knew that to be a soldier in the army of God, The first thing that you had to do was to enlist…

 It has to start with a point of commitment.

 It is a choice that each person must make for themselves….

 So, he challenges the people to make that choice…

**Josh 24:14 (NIV) "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness.**

In order for them to do that there were some things that they needed to do..

 They first would need to…

Throw away the gods their forefathers worshipped beyond the River while they were in Egypt, the false gods of this world, and make a choice to serve the LORD only.

Jesus says the same thing to us when He says:

**Matt 6:24 (NIV) "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.**

The idol, the god that Jesus was specifically speaking about here was money but the truth applies to anything that takes the place of an idol, a god in our life.

 The simple definition of an idol is anything that we regard higher than God.

 Our society is full of idols and idol worship. In fact there are many more idols in contemporary America today then there where in the world of Jesus day!

 Think of something in your life that may distract you from serving God, something that may keep you from Church or Church fellowship or from spending quality time with God in His Word and prayer, something that you give a little higher place of priority to in your life then God….

 When you get it pictured in your mind put the word idol above it… Because that is what it is.

 To some it may be the biggest idol in America, a 13 to 65 inch box---a television set, to others it may be baseball, football or basketball, to others it may be a job, a career, to others it may be some inanimate object such as a car, a boat, a house.

 We can even allow other people to become an idol in our lives.

 Our husbands or wives or children can become an idol if we place them in higher regard then we do our relationship with Christ.

Jesus said that no one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

With the people that Joshua is addressing, he really lays it on the line… He brings them to a point of decision, a point of commitment.

**15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."**

When the people he had been placed in a position of leadership over had become wishy-washy in their faith and relationship to God Joshua brings them to a place of confrontation and to a point of commitment-

 Joshua says: **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.**

 **Fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness.**

**Or serve the gods your forefathers served beyond the River.**

But—get off the proverbial fence! Make the choice one way or the other!

 For you cannot serve two masters at the same time!

 Then Joshua tells them of the choice that he has made and hopes that they will make also…

 **But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."**

How could Joshua not only boldly proclaim that choice for himself but for his entire household as well?

Because For Joshua, it was an honor to serve God..

 It was such an honor that he wanted his family and friends to experience what he had experienced.

 The honor that is only found through a life of dedication and service to the Lord….

 I would like to challenge us with this same challenge this morning….

 To whom have we chosen, to whom do we choose to serve today?

 The gods on the other side of the river, the gods and idols of this world?

 Or have we chosen; do we choose to faithfully serve the Lord?

 Serve Him in whatever capacity that He has called us to serve?

 Can you say with all the other men and women and children of the faith this morning…. It’s an honor to serve, to join in the fight, to lift up my voice, to lay down my life, giving glory to God, keeping none in return, it’s an honor, an honor to serve!

 I would like to close with an appropriate quote from “Ig-nat-e-ous Low-yol-ah” this morning…

*“Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as You deserve: to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labor and not to ask for any reward except that of knowing that we do Your will.”*

 Have you enlisted in Gods army this morning? Are you a soldier of Christ? Are you faithfully serving Him in all that you do? Have you found that it is indeed an honor to serve?