

CARRIED INTO BATTLE
May 25, 2014 Memorial Day Weekend
The Church of the Covenant

On March 20th 1943 my Aunt Mary and my Uncle Bill Broberg presented to my father, then 19 years old, a Christian devotional book, entitled "Strength for Service to God and Country". When I arrived at The Church of the Covenant five years ago my Dad presented this little book to me. To be clear, I do not believe he was implying that my service at The Church of the Covenant was akin to his service on the battlefield in World War II. Here it has been all joy and sunshine. But, rather, it is emblematic that the Word of God written (God's Holy Word) and the Word of God in the flesh (God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ) these are the things "*which make for peace*". No Jesus; no peace. If we KNOW Jesus, much peace. So this little booklet is the Word that my dear father CARRIED INTO BATTLE and then gave to me.

When he presented it to me I read through it and was much surprised to discover that there on August 24th in the devotional book was a devotion written by The Reverend W. Paul Ludwig of Second Presbyterian Church in Washington, PA. Second Presbyterian is one of the forerunner churches that constitutes The Church of the Covenant. So my Dad carried with him into battle in WWII a devotion written by a pastor of the very same church which one day his son would serve. Small world. What goes around, comes around. As we sow, so shall we reap. And so I wrote in my sermon notebook for such a time as this the words, "Carried into Battle", as in, it was the very Word of God which my Dad carried into battle with him, and may I suggest preserved him and strengthened him and brought him safely home.

Dr. Ludwig quotes 2 Corinthians 5: 14 within his devotional. He uses the old King James Version of the Bible and quotes: "*The love of Christ constraineth us*". Updated it states: "*The love of Christ controls us...*" Ludwig notes that, "The secret is to be so dominated by Christ and so positively aggressive in Christian performance that corrupt desires are soon forgotten...the one positive answer to the problem of the good life: that Christ should live again in me." It is the LOVE OF CHRIST that carries us into battle. No one wishes to lay down their life for anything; the desire to live is one of the most profound inner human urges that exist. To preserve life, to live life to continue to live is one of the most basic of all human emotions. So for someone to serve in the military, for a police officer to place his body as a shield for others, for a fireman to run into a burning building, for someone to lay down their life for another requires, may I say, a deep love, and this deep love, I believe, comes from Christ. It is the deep and powerful love of Christ, alive in our heart through the presence of the Holy Spirit, that propels us into situations where we lay down our life for another. "No greater love is there than this", says Jesus, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And Jesus has called us "friend". Jesus' love compelled Him to go to Calvary and to lay down His life for His friends, for us. The love of Christ constraineth us, it controls us, it compels us, to live our lives laid down for others and as a gift for the life Christ has laid down for us. Does the LOVE of CHRIST so constrain us that we lay down our selfish desires and choose, no longer to live for ourselves, but we choose to live for HIM??????????

Whole generations of men and women have entered into the service, compelled by the love of Christ, and have laid down their lives for us, that we might live. On this Memorial Day Weekend we honor their sacred memories and we ask that we might be raised up as people such as they, those whom the love of Christ compelled.

There is another battle that is analogous to the battlefields of World War II. These are the inner, spiritual battles of the heart and soul. When we face the battles of life it is best to take the Word of God

with us. It is best that the Bible is CARRIED INTO BATTLE. Ephesians says we are to *“take the whole armor of God”* (Ephesians 6:13) We are to *“strong in the Lord and in the strength of HIS might”* (Ephesians 6: 10) We are to *“stand therefore...”*; we are to take our stand and we are to make our stand. We are to take *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* (Ephesians 6: 17) Going into battle without carrying the Word of God with you is like a soldier going into battle with no rifle. It is like an airman flying a plane with no ammo. It is like a fireman with no water. It is like a policeman with no sidearm. We stand and we face down the battles of life when we carry the Word of God in our heart, when we place that devotional booklet over our heart, then it protects us from all harm. Why aren't you studying the Word of God NOW for that day when you enter the fray and face spiritual death at the hands of a spiritual enemy? Why would we enter the battle without the sword of the Lord, which is the Word of God?????

We need to carry the Word of God with us into battle. We face something that feels impossible. Quote: *“With God all things are possible.”* (Matthew 25: 13) And doubt is shot down in flames. We feel powerless on our own. Jesus promises in His Word that He is always with us. Quote: *“Lo, I am with you always, til the close of the age.”* *“Be strong and courageous, for I the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”* Lord, there are things in life I cannot do, it is too much, it is overwhelming. Quote: *“I can do all things through HIM who gives me strength.”* (Philippians 13:4) I have prayed and prayed and prayed and nothing has happened –Jesus says: *“Behold, I set before you an open door which no one can shut.”* I am feeling unfairly criticized and maligned. Quote: *“The Lord is the strong tower of my life, of whom shall I be afraid.”* I am facing my own mortality. Quote from Jesus: *“Because I live, you will live also.”* Why do I do all this good for others, why do I sacrifice, why do I care?, no one sees, no one cares. Quote: *“The love of Christ compels us.”* We do what we do because there is something, someone, alive in our heart that compels us to believe, and live, and sacrifice, and to lay down our lives and desire a better community and world. We lose the battles of the soul because the Word of God is not carried into battle within our heart.

There is power in the Word of God. There is a holy, wonder-working explosive power in the scriptures. It will keep you safe in the midst of the battles of life. It will bring you home. It will fight the war for you, for the *“battle is the Lord’s”*. Study it. Meditate upon it. Every day train yourself for the battles of life. Memorize it. Come to church. Tuck it away in your heart for that day when you need it. For we are carried through the battles of life, when God's Holy Word is CARRIED INTO BATTLE... I learned that from my Dad, and from a little devotional booklet, and from words written by a former pastor of this church that carried my Dad into battle and brought him safely home. And Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*

Gracious Minister to man's spirit, help me to share the moral achievements of great Christ-conquered souls, to know the vitality of Christian character, to capture the thrill of consistent goodness. Inspire in me those noble thoughts which shall lead to noble action, and find in me those pure desires which shall reflect the very presence of the Christ whom I love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

--Prayer by the Reverend Dr. W. Paul Ludwig, Pastor, Second Presbyterian Church, Washington, PA