

"KEEP RANK!"

TEXT: *1Ch 12:33 Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could **keep rank**; they were not of double heart*
*1Ch 12:38 All these men of war, that could **keep rank**, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.*

THESIS: To teach believers to be "good soldiers" by keeping rank.

INTRO.: A. The N.T. admonishes believers to *be "(good soldiers) of Jesus Christ...that (we) may please Him Who hath chosen (us) to be a soldier."* **2 Tim. 2:3,4** Israel went into Egypt as slaves and came out as soldiers. The Bible says *"the Lord is a man of war..." Ex.15:3.*

B. The O.T. passages here also speaks of *"good soldiers."* It says that those who were in Israel's armies who desired to make David the King, included those of the tribe of Zebulun who were *"expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand WHICH COULD **KEEP RANK**" and "were not of double heart." V.33*

TRANS.: These statements were high compliments to these soldiers and we want to focus on one outstanding quality of any good soldier – that of **KEEPING RANK!** There are several principles one must follow to do this and to be a "good soldier" of the Lord Jesus Christ...

I. DON'T BUCK AUTHORITY!

A. Respect the Chain of Command:

1. Jesus is the Captain of our salvation & has issued the marching orders for the Church.
2. The Great Commission has not & will not and cannot change.
3. Good soldiers keep on doing what they are commanded to do.

B. Respond to the Commander-in-Chief:

ILLUS.: Every military man in the U.S. armed forces must swear to *"obey the orders of the Pres. Of the U.S. and the officers appointed over (him)."* We are told to obey Jesus and "those who have the (spiritual) rule over us..." Heb. 7:7 & 13

1. A good soldier doesn't change the battle plan.

ILLUS.: Many today say confrontational evangelism or "soul-winning" is outdated and want to change to "lifestyle evangelism," but the battle plan still says *"go into all the world and preach the Gospel!"* not "go...and smile...or be good...etc."

2. Soldiers who get sidetracked and become "entangled" in other things "break rank" and are lost to the cause.

2 Timothy 2:4 **No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.**

II. DON'T GET JEALOUS OVER ANOTHER'S RANK OR POSITION!

A. Obedience, Not Promotion, is the Soldier's Goal.

B. Winning Battles, Not Seeking Rank, is the Soldier's Objective:

ILLUS.: Forget ambition, forget titles, just STAY IN RANK! I have had men and women who have been bus captains, S.S. teachers, children's church leaders, etc. for years and years. They just KEPT RANK. They were not seeking position – they increased their responsibility, expertise & commitment.

III. DON'T BREAK RANK IN WAR OR PEACE!

A. Stay in Rank When Marching.

B. Stay in Rank When Fighting.

ILLUS.: Many leave the church when the battles come. **KEEP RANK!** It is in the battle that a soldier is proven...not on the drill field. "Well, they didn't treat my Junior or Suzie right in school or the youth group!" **KEEP RANK!**

IV. DON'T CHANGE COMPANIES!

A. Declare: *"This is my church!"*

B. Decide: **"That is my preacher!"**

ILLUS.: You can find another "company" you'll like better for a time, but you will discover that some of their troops don't get baths, get out of rank, get jealous, are ambitious, argue, etc. You will find that their "Captain" isn't perfect either!! **KEEP RANK!**

1. Decide to stay for life.
2. Say *"This is where God planted me & this is where I'll grow!"*
3. State: *"Until the Commander-in-Chief issues new orders, I'll stay!"*

V. DON'T TURN ASIDE TO SKIRMISHES!

A. Stay with Your Assignment: **"not of double heart"**

ILLUS.: Some used to be active – bus capt., S.S. teachers, etc. but are now out of rank! Stay focused. Paul declared *"This ONE THING I do!"*

B. Stick with Your Orders:

ILLUS.: Moab and Edom tried to sidetrack Israel away from Caanan – God said to stay on the King's Highway! **KEEP RANK!**

Sanballat & Tobiah used psychological warfare, threats, heckled and harassed Nehemiah, but he would not quit or come down till the wall was completed! **KEEP RANK! STAY ON THE WALL!**

VI. DON'T BATTLE WITH EACH OTHER! Cf. v.38 "of one heart"

A. Direct Your Strength Against Your Enemies:

NOTE: Mt. 16:18: Jesus declared of the Church **"the gates of hell would not prevail against it."** Churches are destroyed from within, not from without, most of the time! People get out of rank!

B. Determine to Stand Together:

ILLUS.: Amos told the story of a man who met a lion and fled, then a bear and fled, then went back home and was bitten by a serpent. Our greatest enemy is often within our own ranks!! **KEEP RANK!**

Amos 5:19 *As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.*

VII. DON'T QUIT BECAUSE OF CASUALTIES:

A. If Others Desert – You Stay Put!

1. Decide that doctrine is more important than friendship.
2. Decide that duty is more important than desire.

B. If Others Fall – You Stand!

1. Some leave over standards, peer pressure, pressure for duty, etc.
2. Decide that even if you don't DO right, you will stay by the stuff and SUPPORT right!!!! **KEEP RANK!**

ILLUS.: If the pastor gets called to another station – you stay! If the deacons quit – you stay! If the preacher dies – you stay! Unless it is false doctrine, open sin in the camp or crooked leadership – **KEEP RANK!**

VIII. DON'T GO A.W.O.L.! (Absent WithOut Leave)

A. When Assembly is Sounded – Get in Rank!

1. Attend every service – including special services.
2. When the doors are open – walk through them.

B. When the Battle Charge Sounds – stay in Rank!

1. Make sure your kids attend every service.
2. Every deacon, teacher & member should be in every service.

ILLUS.: The service you or your child misses could be the one God wanted to use to change your or his direction, change a life, win a victory, etc. Good soldiers **KEEP RANK** in heat, cold, rain, sun, snow, blow, sniffles, colds, fevers, wounds, backaches, heartaches, etc. **KEEP RANK!** The Commander is counting on YOU!

CONCL.: Our Commander-in-Chief is coming soon to inspect the troops. **KEEP RANK!** "It is required of a steward that he be found (happy, bubbly, tingly, satisfied, contented...NO!)...FAITHFUL!! **KEEP RANK!!**