Spiritual Warfare

Chapter 7 – Anatomy of a Warrior



Danielle Carter

WHAT DOES A WARRIOR LOOK LIKE?

That is an important question because our natural tendency is often to judge based on what we can see. We expect warriors to have a certain appearance—strength, confidence, boldness, and perhaps even an intimidating presence. But God has never limited Himself to outward appearances. Jesus warned us about making judgments based only on what we see:

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."
John 7:24

I have learned that lesson many times. Some of the people who have impacted me most spiritually were not the ones who would immediately stand out in a crowd. They were not necessarily the loudest, the most charismatic, or the people you would naturally assume carried great spiritual authority.

But then they began to pray. I have heard people who seemed ordinary on the outside begin to intercede, and suddenly there was a boldness and authority that could not be explained by personality or natural ability. Their prayers carried weight. Their words were filled with faith. It was evident that something had been developed within them through their relationship with God.

A true warrior is not identified by outward appearance. The qualities of a spiritual warrior are formed in the hidden places—the places where faith is strengthened, character is developed, and intimacy with God grows.
Throughout Scripture, we see men and women who carried the heart of a warrior. They were not all the same. Their personalities, backgrounds, and circumstances were very different. But they shared certain qualities that enabled them to stand, fight, and overcome.

As we examine their lives, we will discover characteristics that God still desires to cultivate in His people today.

Epaphroditus – the risk taker

> *"Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore, I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of*

Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me." Philippians 2:25-30

Epaphroditus is not usually the first person we think of when we consider biblical examples of warriors. He was not a military leader like Joshua. He was not a giant slayer like David. He was not a prominent apostle who traveled throughout the known world preaching the gospel. He was a messenger. The Philippian church had sent him to Paul with support and encouragement while Paul was imprisoned. His assignment may have appeared ordinary, but the way he carried it out revealed something extraordinary about his heart. Paul called him a fellow soldier.

That description is significant because Paul did not use warrior language casually. He recognized something in Epaphroditus that went beyond simply delivering a message. This was a man who was willing to sacrifice, endure hardship, and put the mission of Christ above his own safety.

The part of this passage that stands out most is Paul's statement that Epaphroditus "for the work of Christ came close to death, not regarding his life." He did not consider his own comfort the highest priority. He did not measure his obedience by convenience. He did not determine his level of commitment based on how much difficulty he was willing to tolerate. When there was something needed for the advancement of the kingdom, Epaphroditus was willing to pay the price.

How different this can be from the way we often approach our service to Christ. I live in the deep South, where the summer heat can be intense. There have been times when I have allowed something as simple as discomfort to become an excuse for not doing what God has called me to do. How can I go witness door-to-door when it is almost 100 degrees outside? How can I stand outside at an evangelistic event when I know I'm going to be hot and exhausted? And yet, I have to ask myself—how can I allow a little inconvenience to stop me when Jesus willingly endured the cross for my sake? How can comfort become more important to me than obedience?

When I hear stories of believers around the world who suffer imprisonment for their faith, lose their jobs because they refuse to deny Jesus, or put their own lives at risk to advance the gospel, I am challenged. Their examples force me to examine my own heart and ask difficult questions.

Where have I placed limits on my surrender? At what point do I decide that following Jesus has become too uncomfortable? Every warrior must eventually confront those questions because spiritual warfare will require a willingness to move beyond comfort. There will be moments when obedience interrupts our plans. There may be nights when the Holy Spirit wakes us to pray for someone who is struggling. There may be opportunities to serve that require us to sacrifice time, energy, resources, or personal preferences.

A warrior learns to recognize these moments not as inconveniences, but as invitations to participate in the work of God. Epaphroditus understood something that every spiritual warrior must learn: the kingdom of God is worth the cost. He was willing to risk his health, his safety, and even his life because the mission mattered more than his own comfort.

A warrior does not ignore personal needs or act recklessly, but he does refuse to let comfort become his master. Like Epaphroditus, we must learn to value kingdom assignment above personal convenience.

Jonathan – the trail blazer

> *Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few." 1 Samuel 14:6*

Jonathan was the son of King Saul, and at this point in Israel's history the Philistines had positioned themselves for battle. The enemy was nearby, waiting for the right opportunity to attack. Saul, Jonathan, and the Israelite army were aware of the threat, but they seemed content to remain in their current position and wait.

Jonathan, however, could not remain passive. Something within him recognized that the enemy's presence demanded a response. While everyone else was watching and waiting, Jonathan decided to move. Without announcing his plans to the rest of the army, he and his armor bearer stepped forward and went toward the Philistine garrison. We are not told the exact size of the Philistine force, but the fact that there was a garrison indicates that Jonathan was not approaching a small or insignificant group of soldiers. Humanly speaking, the odds were completely against him. Yet Jonathan understood something that many believers forget: the outcome of a battle is not determined solely by human strength, numbers, or resources. God is not limited by what appears impossible.

His statement to his armor bearer reveals the foundation of his confidence: *"It may be that the Lord will work for us."* Jonathan was not operating from arrogance or presumption. He was not claiming that he could defeat the enemy through his own ability. His confidence came from knowing that God was able to accomplish His purposes regardless of the circumstances. Whether God chose to save by many or by few, Jonathan knew that victory ultimately came from Him.

That faith gave him the courage to move when everyone else was standing still. Jonathan could have chosen the safer path. He could have waited for Saul to give the command, waited for the army to mobilize, or simply convinced himself that the situation was too dangerous to engage. But warriors do not measure every opportunity

by comfort or convenience. They recognize that there are moments when obedience requires action, even when the path ahead carries risk.

Jonathan's boldness became the catalyst for an entire nation. His victory stirred courage in others who had been hesitant and afraid. What began with one man and his armor bearer eventually became a victory for all of Israel. Sometimes God uses the faith of one person to awaken faith in many others.

This is a powerful lesson for spiritual warfare. A warrior cannot watch the enemy advance and remain inactive simply because everyone else is hesitant. There are times when God calls someone to step forward first. It may feel lonely. It may feel like nobody else understands the urgency. But obedience is not determined by whether others join us immediately.

Perhaps you have looked around and become discouraged because people around you seem uninterested in engaging spiritually. Maybe you see the enemy gaining ground in your family, your church, your community, or your city, and you wonder why nobody seems willing to respond. It may be that God is waiting for someone to step forward and lead the way. And maybe that someone is YOU!

Jonathan started with only one other person beside him, but his courage created an opportunity for others to join the fight. Never underestimate what God can do through someone who is willing to move in faith. Like Jonathan, a warrior is willing to follow God's direction even when he has to be the first one to step onto the battlefield.

David's Mighty Men

Shammah – Fight for your pea patch

> *And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. So the people fled from the Philistines. But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. So the LORD brought about a great victory. 2 Samuel 23:11-12*

Shammah's victory seems almost insignificant when compared to some of the other battles recorded in Scripture. He wasn't defending a city, a palace, or some great national treasure. He was standing in a field of lentils. To many people, that would hardly seem like a place worth risking their life to defend.

But someone had planted that field. Someone had prepared the soil, invested the time, and expected a harvest from that work. It represented something that had value, even if others did not recognize it. When the Philistines approached, the rest of the people looked at the situation and decided the field was not worth fighting for. They

abandoned it and allowed the enemy to take what did not belong to them. Shammah saw it differently.

He understood a principle that every warrior must learn: there is no territory that we can casually surrender to the enemy. The question is not whether the thing being attacked appears important. The question is whether the enemy is attempting to gain ground that God has entrusted to us.

Many times we underestimate the significance of small battles. We may think, "It's only this one area of my life," or "It's not really that big of a deal." But every compromise creates an opportunity for the enemy to advance. Every time we choose passivity over resistance, we make it easier for him to move further into territory that was never his to occupy.

A person who refuses to fight for the small things will eventually find themselves unprepared when the larger battles come. If we will not resist the enemy when he attacks our thoughts, our habits, our integrity, or our devotion to God, what makes us think we will suddenly become courageous when the attack comes against something more visible and valuable, such as our family, our health, or our future?

Shammah's battle was not ultimately about lentils. It was about refusing to allow the enemy to take something that had been entrusted to him. That is why every battle matters.

Every opportunity to resist the enemy strengthens our spiritual endurance. Every victory builds confidence in God's power. Every time we stand firm, we learn that the enemy is not as powerful as he wants us to believe. The field itself may seem insignificant, but the lesson learned through defending it is invaluable.

The enemy will always look for opportunities to advance. He will test boundaries. He will look for areas where we have become tired, distracted, or unwilling to engage. He does not need to take everything at once. He only needs an opening.

At some point, every believer must decide where they will make their stand. There comes a moment when we say, "Enough. This far and no further. I will not surrender another inch of ground." The enemy will come for our pea patches. The question is not whether the attack will come, but how we will respond when it does. Some people will abandon what God has entrusted to them because the fight seems too difficult. Others will stand their ground, trusting that God can bring victory even through an ordinary person defending an ordinary field.

Shammah stood in the middle of that field, and the Lord brought about a great victory. Like Shammah, a warrior fights every battle because every battle is an opportunity to resist the enemy and see God demonstrate His power.

Eleazar – the death grip

> *And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel had retreated. He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder. 2 Samuel 23:9-10*

Eleazar's story is one of extraordinary perseverance. He was not simply willing to fight; he was willing to continue fighting long after the battle had become difficult. The Scripture tells us that he fought until his hand became weary and his hand literally stuck to his sword. He had gripped his weapon for so long and fought with such determination that he could no longer separate himself from it.

There is something powerful about that picture. Eleazar did not maintain his commitment to the battle only while he had strength, enthusiasm, or favorable circumstances. He continued until the enemy was defeated. He reached the point where there was nothing left to give, yet he refused to release his sword.

That is the heart of a warrior.

Throughout Scripture, we see this same principle repeated: victory often belongs to those who are willing to endure. The warrior understands that difficulty is not always an indication that the battle has been lost. Sometimes difficulty is simply evidence that the battle is still being fought.

This is an area where many believers need God to strengthen them. We live in a culture that has trained us to value speed, comfort, and convenience. We expect problems to be solved quickly and challenges to pass quickly. But spiritual battles do not always operate on our preferred timeline. Some victories require persistence. Some breakthroughs come only after we have continued standing when every natural reason tells us to give up.

I wonder how many victories we have abandoned just before the breakthrough came. How many prayers were close to being answered, but we stopped contending because the waiting became too difficult? How many situations would have turned around if we had simply maintained our grip a little longer?

There is a danger in allowing exhaustion to convince us that obedience is no longer necessary. The enemy understands that he does not always need to defeat us through direct attack. Sometimes he only needs to wear us down until we voluntarily step away from the fight. But Scripture reminds us:

> *who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Hebrews 11:33-34*

Notice that these victories came through faith, but they also came through endurance. These men and women continued when circumstances were difficult. They pressed forward when their own strength was insufficient. In their weakness, God demonstrated His power.

Eleazar's hand was tired, but his grip remained firm. That is the picture of spiritual perseverance. There will be moments when prayer feels difficult, obedience feels costly, and the battle seems longer than expected. Those are the moments when we must remember that God is not looking for a temporary burst of enthusiasm. He is developing warriors who know how to stand.

The goal is not simply to survive the battle. The goal is to remain engaged until victory comes. Like Eleazar, a warrior keeps a firm grip on the sword and fights until the battle is won.

Benaiah – Fearless in the Battle

> *Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel, who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He also had gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day. And he killed an Egyptian, a spectacular man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand; so he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. 2 Samuel 23:20-21*

Benaiah's story is one of the most remarkable accounts among David's mighty men. Scripture tells us that he was a man who had accomplished many great deeds, but we are only given a glimpse of a few of them. Even the limited examples we have reveal something significant about the kind of person he was.

Benaiah was not someone who avoided difficult situations. In fact, he seemed to move toward the very things that most people would have run from. Consider the lion in the pit. Benaiah did not encounter a lion in a place where he could easily escape if things went wrong. He went down into a pit, creating a situation where there was no easy way out. If the lion overpowered him, there was nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. The battle had only two possible outcomes: victory or death.

That kind of courage is difficult for us to comprehend because most of us naturally look for a way to protect ourselves. We calculate the risks. We consider the consequences. We look for the safest option. Wisdom has its place, but there are moments when faith

requires us to step forward despite the risk because we know God is greater than the thing standing before us.

Then we see Benaiah facing the Egyptian warrior. The Egyptian had a spear, while Benaiah approached with only a staff. The advantage seemed to belong entirely to his opponent. Yet Benaiah did not allow the appearance of the situation to determine the outcome. He confronted the enemy, took the weapon from his hand, and used that very weapon to defeat him.

There is something powerful about that picture. The enemy may come against us with weapons designed to intimidate and defeat us, but God is able to turn those very things around for His purposes. What was intended to destroy Benaiah became the instrument of victory.

This is the kind of boldness that should mark the life of a spiritual warrior. Not a reckless confidence in ourselves, but a settled confidence in God. Our courage in battle grows as we understand the authority we have received through Christ and as we gain personal experiences of watching God move when we step forward in faith.

Benaiah's courage was also connected to his heritage. The passage tells us that his father was a valiant man who had accomplished great things. Benaiah grew up with the example of someone who lived courageously. He likely heard stories of victory, faith, and perseverance from an early age. Those stories helped shape his understanding of what was possible.

There is power in having examples to follow. The testimonies of others can stir faith within us and remind us that God is still the God of victory. But not everyone has grown up around people who modeled this kind of faith. Some have never had anyone demonstrate what it looks like to live boldly for God.

If that describes you, then become that example for someone else. Your obedience, your faith, and your willingness to trust God in difficult situations may become the testimony that inspires another person to step into their own calling. Every generation needs people who are willing to believe God, confront fear, and demonstrate what a life of faith looks like.

Like Benaiah, a warrior does not approach the battle intimidated by the enemy. A warrior steps forward with confidence, knowing that God is greater than anything standing in the way.