

**Soldiers
Who
Keep
Rank**

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The history of fallen men is strewn with wars and bloodshed on the face of the earth. Countless soldiers perished on the battlefields and their blood stained the earth from one corner to the other. These soldiers expired in pitiless waste not knowing whether they had won the war. Soldiering is not for the fainted hearted and ill-disciplined. The fate of winning or loosing during battle skirmishes lies much with the qualities of the soldiers. Untrained and ill-disciplined soldiers panic and flee during battles. They are a liability instead of an asset to the army. Only those well-trained soldiers who could keep rank in times of battle, will make a significant difference to the outcome of the battle. These soldiers who could keep ranks are rare breed and are much sought after. In today's world, the Gurkhas are regarded as fierce and fearless soldiers from Nepal who could keep rank and would not retreat during battles. They are much feared by many and the British in modern times deployed them against the Argentineans during the Falkland war in the eighties. Quite a number of countries employed contingents of such soldiers to guard critical installations and protect important national leaders. It is not easy to find well-trained soldiers who can keep rank.

In the Holy Bible, there are some soldiers who are recorded to be capable of keeping rank. In particular, this reference of keeping rank is awarded to the tribes of Zebulun of Israel. They are a remarkable people and are singled out in the chronological records for such commendation. Fighting during times of war is no small matter. One either has to kill or gets killed. One either gets out in a body bag or on a stretcher. There is no discharge from the war. The children of Israel are a nation called to engage in battles with the enemies of Jehovah God. Soldiers of such qualities no doubt deserve high esteem and are greatly valued. Their contribution towards victory for their people cannot be underestimated. Since the Christian warfare is also a constant battle in the spiritual realm, the intensity and consequence of such battles are no less severe than that of the children of Israel, it therefore behooves Christians to study the nature and character of these soldiers who can keep rank to help learn the ropes of securing victory over the enemies of our soul.

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. (1 Chronicles 12:33)

Christians are expected to read through the entire Bible. However, reading through the book of Chronicles is not what most Christians would consider interesting and an adventure to look forward to. However, the words recorded in those books are still the words of the living God given by inspiration. Not one word is superfluous and undeserving of the time spent to read them. It is from such records that gems are often discovered and important lessons learned. Of course such discovery does not come naturally and easily but requires great patience in waiting upon the Lord to reveal spiritual truths buried in the written words of truth from within the pages of the Holy Bible. Without spiritual exercise in asking the Lord to reveal sacred truths from the Scriptures, a Christian cannot hope to learn any deep truths from within the Holy Bible other than some superficial head knowledge that has little benefit to the hungry souls of men.

This study on the soldiers who could keep rank opens up an entire subject on soldiering and warfare, in particular, how a Christian ought to train himself to be equipped with such capability so that he would be able to withstand the fiery darts of the evil ones. For Christians are commanded on the posture to take during battles: **Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:13)** A Christian will not be able to stand if he cannot keep rank. He will flee instead of standing. He will panic instead of holding to his post. He will cause the hearts of his fellow comrades to faint by his action. Keeping rank is no small matter in warfare. Hence, a study on this great tribe recorded in the Chronicles will prove to be useful and a blessing to those seeking to stand in battle formation for the Lord's work. Keeping rank in the army is not something that comes naturally. A lot of hard work and discipline are required to mold a soldier into such a contingent of troops that will be able to keep rank in the battle. In this regards, the tribe of Zebulun is a good example for would be soldiers to learn from and follow, if one wants to be successful in overcoming the enemies and bring victory, honour and glory to their nation.

And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son. And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun. (Genesis 30:19&20)

Zebulun was one of the sons born of Leah during the rivalry between Leah and Rachel. Leah was Jacob's first wife and Rachel his second wife. Jacob loved Rachel and wanted to marry her. However, this schemer Jacob was outsmarted by his father-in-law Laban who tricked him into marrying his elder daughter Leah first. From then on, his family was full of sibling rivalry between the two sisters striving to fight for attention from Jacob. One way to get the upper hand was to give birth to as many children as possible. While engaging in this childbearing competition between the two sisters, Zebulun came into the world as Leah's sixth son born to Jacob.

When Zebulun was born, Rachel was still childless. It seemed like Leah was winning the race hands down while Rachel hoping against all hope would give up this fight with her sister Leah. While Leah could rest assured that she had won this battle by bearing so many children to Jacob, it did not appear that Jacob would regard her as his rightful wife. His heart was still with Rachel. It was because of Rachel whom he fell in love at first sight that he offered to serve Laban for seven years to win the hands of Rachel. Labouring for seven years was not a short time by man's years but to Jacob, it was indeed worth the while and it was some worthy goals to set sight upon. Who would not look forward to the day to marry the sweetheart of his dream and so seven years was no big deal to say the least. When the seven years was up, little did Jacob realize that he had been tricked. He was offered Leah instead of Rachel. What else could he do? He was made an offer to serve another seven years for the hands of Rachel. What choice did he have? So he laboured for another seven years for the love of Rachel. Love is something that is exceedingly difficult to explain. Perhaps love is blind. Of course, Jacob did not know the kind of trouble he would have in his home for marrying two sisters.

While Leah had already given birth to six sons to Jacob, she still felt she was not his rightful first wife in the eyes of Jacob. So having given birth to several sons to Jacob she was still striving for acceptance from her husband. This must be quite a painful experience and a heavy trial for Leah. Only a woman could understand the pain and frustration in such circumstances which were beyond her control. What could she do except to

seek after the affection of her husband and perhaps having more children would be the way out. Though Leah was having the upper hand now with half a dozen of children while Rachel still had not gotten started in the race, it still seemed like she was not very successful in this regard. Her frustrations and pains could hardly be penned but the Scriptures did show the kind of battle she was facing in trying to win over her husband's affection. The rivalry between the two sisters was very intense so much so that at one time Leah charged Rachel for robbing her of her husband in Genesis 30:15: **And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes.** It was amazing to note that in order for Leah to sleep with her own husband, transaction of some kind would require to change hands. She had to literally purchase the time to spend with her own husband. Some may find this ridiculous but the fact of the matter is family troubles are stranger than fiction. The Chinese has a saying that every family has a book of sacred writing that is difficult to read. That is why many people are reluctant to interfere with other people's family trouble. Everyone has his own trouble at home!

So now having given birth to Zebulun, she hoped Jacob would dwell with her. From her charge for Rachel, it looked like Jacob was living with Rachel more than with her. Her hope of having a husband who would dwell with her was understandable. Which woman would not like to have her own husband to dwell with her? How many women would not mind sharing her husband with others? What more when this competitor to fight for attention from her husband was her own sister? Perhaps it was such vexing trouble in the home of those who had married more than one wife, in particular, the two wives were sisters that the Law of Moses had an injunction on the practice of polygamy according to Leviticus 18:18: **Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time.**

The earnest hope of Leah was that her husband might dwell with her. Who would not sympathize with her? The circumstances were beyond her control. She was married off according to her father's will. She found herself in such a marriage she did not ask for. What more when Jacob's treatment for her was totally uncalled for and she must have endured such unjust treatment in silent agony. Her plight even caught the pity of heaven and attracted divine intervention from above: **And when the LORD saw that**

Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren. (Genesis 29:31) Eventually, Zebulun was born, the sixth son under such troubling circumstances in the home of Jacob. The hope of Leah that her husband would finally dwell with her came after she had given birth to Zebulun. Hence the name Zebulun means dwelling. This son was named Zebulun because of Leah's earnest hope that Jacob would finally dwell with her. This was the history and the meaning of the name of Zebulun.

Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon. (Genesis 49:13)

These were the words for Zebulun from a dying man none other than his own father Jacob. All the sons of Jacob were gathered around Jacob to hear the last words concerning the fate of their respective tribes. These words were uttered from the perspective of a prophet. Jacob's walk with God was not anything worth shouting for. It was only towards the end of his life that the Lord became very real, near and dear to him. Before he passed on to the other side to be with his fathers, he prophesied concerning all his sons regarding their future fate in a land promised to their great grandfather Abraham. They must be very attentive during this moment of revelation from the patriarch Jacob. Some of them received lengthy revelations concerning their descendents but some received few words. As for Zebulun, that was all the words he had gotten that day. Nothing more and nothing less.

These words spoke about a land in which the descendents of Zebulun would dwell. It indicated the nature of the land to be given to them to inherit one day in the future where all these twelve tribes were organized into a nation. At that point in time, they were still residing in Egypt as strangers under the hospitality of Pharaoh who raised Joseph to be the second person in command in Egypt. These words spoken to Zebulun though rather brief, informed him well in advance the kind of land he would be given. His descendents were to be given a land where it would be a haven for ships. So far all the children of Jacob were all land based and none was mentioned to have anything to do with ships or had any experience in sea trade. So for Zebulun, it would be an eye opener. Did he expect to learn that his descendents would be given a land where it would be haven for ships? What was his reaction that day? What raced through his mind on such a revelation? One could only guess.

The border for Zebulun would reach Zidon. This was the first mention of Zidon in the Holy Bible. The Holy Bible also revealed that inhabitants of Zidon were mariners according to Ezekiel 27:8. The Zidonians were also worshippers of false gods and they became a constant source of trouble to Israel in which even Solomon was drawn away as mentioned in 1 Kings 11:5: **For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.** So the tribes of Zebulun would be located in a treacherous land where warfare with the

people of the false gods would be expected. But Jacob was not the only person who prophesied of the twelve tribes of Israel. Moses too had something to reveal to the twelve tribes of Israel before he died. Here were the words he gave to Zebulun.

And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents. They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand. (Deuteronomy 33:18&19)

The people of Zebulun and Issachar were mentioned together by Moses. Though few in words, much revelation was communicated. The children of Zebulun were told to rejoice in their going out. They were a prosperous people and hence they rejoiced according to the commandment of Moses. The people of Zebulun were given a land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee. They were a people of trade and commerce. They were a people promised of much riches in particular riches in the sacrifices of righteousness. In fact, they were a very sacrificial people. They were such sacrificial people that the Scriptures mentioned that they jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high places of the field (Judges 5:18). Living between two seas, these people learned to subdue the elements of nature and turn them to their advantage and profit. They were an industrious people and much blessing came through this tribe to the children of Israel. Though they were adept at commercial enterprise, in times of conflict, they were joined as one united people of one heart and one mind able to keep rank to defeat their enemies. Earthly preoccupation did not stifle their resolve in a higher cause for the good of her people and nation. Such is the quality and character of the tribe of Zebulun.

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. (1 Chronicles 12:33)

Here is a single verse in the chronological records that spoke much about this people of Zebulun. They were given a land between two seas to **suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand (Deuteronomy 33:19)**. Being skillful at commercial enterprise, they had done well. They had been very much a blessing in the land of Israel and rejoicing in the good fortunes bestowed from above. But there was something most outstanding in the character trait of this people. Most importantly, it was the character trait of Zebulun that they rose to the challenge and displayed their courage in times of adversity.

In times of conflict, they were a people who could keep rank and not pull rank. These were men of rare quality and much sought after. It was hard to find people that were not of double heart. Moreover, these were men who could keep rank in times of war. During times of war, many would desert their posts and would not stand in the gap to stop the onslaught of the enemies. They knew where their places and positions were and they stayed put and would not move away from their posts. They were professional soldiers and their fighting experiences did not come from some military training exercises alone. They engaged in a real warfare.

Who would want soldiers in their rank that were of double heart? Who would want soldiers in their rank that questioned their every move? Who would want soldiers in their rank that had doubts over the outcome of the battle? Those who were not confident of victory should be sent home like the case on the troops led by Gideon. A detailed study on the military strategy adopted by Gideon would be helpful in understanding the need to keep rank in times of war.

During the time of Gideon, Israel was once again living under oppression by their enemies. They turned their back on Jehovah God and so the Midianites came with overwhelming numbers and devoured all that were in their paths. The children of Israel were in great distress due to the oppression of the Midianites. They brought this trouble upon themselves for rebelling against Jehovah God. Nevertheless, God took pity upon the children of Israel and raised up Gideon to deliver them from the bondage under the Midianites. The Lord told Gideon he would be the captain of his

people to deliver Israel from under the bondage of Midian. So Gideon went on a recruitment drive and assembled a host of men from Israel, which numbered 32,000 men.

Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand. (Judges 7:1-3)

However, the Lord told Gideon that he had too many men for the job at hand. The Lord simply did not allow those who were of double heart and could not keep rank to be in Gideon's army during the conflicts with the Midianites. Gideon had gone on an overdrive in his recruitment exercise to raise an army to fight the Midianites. Humanly speaking, the army raised by Gideon was still greatly outnumbered by the Midianites. But the Lord had some other idea for this battle. The Lord actually overruled Gideon and personally did the recruitment exercise for the headcount of the troop for Gideon, which eventually left him with only 300 men. For that most unusual operation to succeed, Gideon could not afford to have a single man who would be of double heart and could not keep rank. This was because Gideon would soon lead his ranger platoon in a most ridiculous maneuver in the history of warfare that no military commander would dare to emulate though after this routing of the enemies with remarkable success.

And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in

their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath. (Judges 7:16-22)

Who would dare adopt such a strategy in the face of a huge organized army when one was totally outnumbered and completely out flanked by the enemy? The ancient military adviser Zhu Ge Liang living during the divided kingdoms in China some 2,000 years back had used the empty city strategy to scare off the enemies not to invade the city. That was just a defensive posture; a last resort having run out of resources. But this man Gideon brought it one step further and adopted a more absurd idea by turning it into an offensive strategy. He brought along some most ridiculous equipment to the battlefield to frighten his enemies. It would be suicidal to charge against a well-armed army simply with a pitcher, a lighter and a trumpet. Did he realize what he was doing? He told his ranger platoon to bring along some kitchenware and musical instrument to the battlefield like they were going for a band practice and a picnic. He gave the most ridiculous order for his men to take on the enemy. He told them to just break the pitcher, turn on the light and blow the trumpet to make a lot of noise.

Could you imagine his original troop of 32,000 staring at him with this outrageous order? If you were one of his soldiers, would you obey him and keep rank? Do you think anyone of those men who was of double heart and could not keep rank would have made it? Just one man breaking rank and desert his post would be disastrous to the whole operation. Spiritually speaking, Christians are also faced with a huge organized enemy of our soul. We are outnumbered, outflanked and outgunned. Those who are not of double heart and could keep rank are few and far between. Are you one of those privileged soldiers of the Lord who would stand in the gap and fight till the last drop of your spiritual blood? The pitchers here symbolize our outward man, our earthen vessel that needs to be broken. The flesh needs to perish so that the light of Christ can shine through to scatter our enemies that will result in their fleeing in chaos and in defeat.

The apostle Paul told the Christians in Corinth: **But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (2 Corinthians 4:7)** These earthen vessels must be broken so that the excellency of the power of God may defeat our foe. This spiritual operation roundup requires steadfastness and people who are resolved to keep rank with the brethren. They must not be of double heart with their heart glued to the world. They must be soldiers of great courage and who would not flinch in the face of adversity and danger. They cannot be men who are entangled with the affairs in this life. Such Christians cannot be good soldiers for Christ. They cannot be trusted to fight along side as they would turn out to be a liability and a burden instead of an asset. Additional headcount with soldiers of such quality is quite useless. In fact, there were regulations governing who could be soldiers that were battle ready and who were not. Those who were not operationally ready soldiers were not expected to be called up for duties.

And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you. And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart. (Deuteronomy 20:3,4,8)

Under the Law of Moses, there was a requirement for the fainthearted to withdraw from battle. Though there was this assurance that Jehovah God would go out to fight the battle for the children of Israel, the fainthearted were not allowed to participate in the battle. This was in spite of the exhortation given to the children of Israel not to tremble and neither be terrified by their enemies. The officers in the army were required to convey this withdrawal instructions to the army should any soldiers be found wanting in their courage to go out for battle. This would prevent such fearful and fainthearted soldiers from discouraging the rest of the army and caused the heart of their brethren to faint as well as their own heart. The cause would be lost if there were such soldiers in their rank who could not keep rank and of a double heart. Such weakening elements within the rank of the army must be eradicated before they go out for battle.

Cowardice is contagious. The spiritual warfare is real. Christians are supposed to train to be good soldiers for Christ and then stand in battle formation. Christians are expected to keep rank and march on to victory. It is God who will fight for us because it is His battle and for His honour and glory. Christians must never become fainthearted or of double heart for it is the Lord who will fight the battle and win the war. Satan is already a defeated foe. Failing to keep rank is tantamount to giving place to the Devil. The tribe of Zebulun was so courageous that they were commended by the prophetess Deborah after the battle with the enemy.

And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardated their lives unto the death in the high places of the field. (Judges 5:15-18)

The battle against the enemies was won that day. Naphtali and Zebulun were the people that jeopardated their lives unto the death in the high places of the field during that battle. Unfortunately, the chief tribe of Reuben broke rank and did not send their troops. They were of double heart and just like the Scriptures reveal, “A double minded man is unstable in all his way.” The people of Reuben were an unstable people and hence such double-hearted people refused to keep rank during times of war. Self-interest and self-preservation were foremost in the minds of such people. They were a discouragement to true soldiers fighting the battle in the frontline. It was good that they did not participate in the battle as they would cause the hearts of others to faint. The psalmist also lamented that the children of Ephraim also abandoned their posts and failed to keep rank in times of war: **The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle (Psalm 78:9)**. What a shame to be children of the Creator God and yet have no confidence in God fighting for His people! Indeed these people of Zebulun were not of double heart. They kept rank and they won the war. Would to God there are more Christians who are like Zebulun! Yes, the Lord does raise up others like Zebulun. The spirit of Zebulun is infectious and does dwell on others when the people of God seek after God.

And of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear thirty and seven thousand. And of the Danites expert in war twenty and eight thousand and six hundred. And of Asher, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand. And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand. 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. And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking: for their brethren had prepared for them. Moreover they that were nigh them, even unto Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought bread on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: for there was joy in Israel. (1 Chronicles 12:34-40)

So the Lord did raise up many such courageous and loyal troops for David. Those who could keep rank were not strictly restricted to the tribe of Zebulun alone though the Scriptures spoke of them highly. When the children of Israel turned to Jehovah God and sought after Him, God raised up many from other tribes who were not of double heart and could keep rank. What a blessing it was for David to have such an army who would not flinch in times of war! With these hundred of thousands of soldiers that could keep rank, they were a formidable army that not many adversaries would dare take them on likely. These were men of discipline and were always ready in battle formation to carry out orders without question. No wonder David won so many battles during his times and all the kingdoms around him submitted to him and paid tribute to him.

It was David during his younger days trusting in the Lord to deliver him and gave him victory over Goliath when the men of Israel failed to keep rank and went into hiding that inspired men all over Israel to do the impossible for Jehovah God. They saw the defeat and death of the giant Goliath and they did exploit with the help from Jehovah God. They saw the giant Goliath could be defeated and killed and they no longer were afraid. They came back to their rank and pursued their enemies and discomfited them. Being able to keep rank and not given to a double heart trusting in God is no small matter. Hence, Jehovah God blessed David with a large number of troops that could keep rank and not of a double heart. The spirit of Zebulun had infected the children of Israel during those days. Courage

and loyalty were the motto of the army of the children of Israel. Would to God that the Church would be blessed with such a spiritual army of Christians who could keep rank and not of a double heart to fight the Lord's battle.

The coronation of David was attended by such an army of loyal troops who could keep rank and not of double heart to anoint him king over all Israel. What a blessing and a blessed sight it was that day. Heaven must be smiling and rejoicing over this servant of Jehovah God and the nation of Israel was blessed with peace and prosperity from end to end. Of course the psalmist could rejoice and claim: **Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD. (Psalm 144:15)** It was indeed blessings from above to give to this nation a fiercely loyal and courageous army that could keep rank to hold their enemies at bay. So the people of Israel were at rest because they had an army who could keep rank to act as a formidable deterrence to would be enemies so that these nations around them would live in peace with Israel.

Besides exhibiting great courage and determination to keep in rank, the Zebulunites were also well known for their hospitality during times of peace and prosperity. When Zebulun was born, he was named as such by Leah hoping that her husband would dwell with her. His name means dwelling. They indeed lived up to their name as dwelling places for the nation of Israel. No doubt, the tribe of Zebulun had been inspiring. They were a people most willing to share their blessings with the brethren. They were not calculated tight fisted people unwilling to share their wealth and resources with their brethren. They were indeed a noble tribe of people. So Zebulun rejoiced according to the prophecy of Moses. Indeed success begets success with the Lord's help. Cowardice will definitely faint the heart of the brethren in times of conflict. The Lord did reward Zebulun with a man to be a judge in Israel. **And after him Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years. And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun. (Judges 12:11&12)** What a blessing it was to be judged by a man from a tribe whose character traits were courage, loyalty and hospitality!

The children of Zebulun resembled those who were always alert and ready. This is important in warfare where the enemies always attack at the least expected moment. Christians must also be alerted to the fact that our enemies are just as determined to cause us harm. They will pounce on us

when we are least prepared. These enemies would likewise rejoice at our downfall. Christians have to be careful not to fall prey to the evil design from these enemies. Instead of being soldiers for Christ, they can become traitors for Christ. They can be seduced and influenced by the enemies to become whisperers, gossipers and sow discord among the brethren to weaken the hands of those who are fighting the spiritual war. Such Christians are double minded and they cannot keep rank in the war. These are unstable people that would cause much harm to the cause of Christ. For Christians have been warned: **A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (James 1:8)** The remedy however is given in James 4:8: **Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.** Zebulun provides Christians with many important lessons in spiritual warfare as well as in strength of character. They were a sacrificial people and most unselfish in sharing blessings with others. Christians should do well emulate the noble traits of these wonderful people of Zebulun.

While Zebulun is quoted in the Holy Bible to be the inspiring tribe of Israel to be capable of keeping rank and not of a double heart, there is another supernatural troop mentioned that would keep rank. The description of this supernatural army is mind-boggling. It does not seem that they are trained on earth in any armies in the world known to men this side of heaven. It does show the importance on keeping rank in any military maneuver that brings the enemies to their knees. This supernatural army is recorded in Joel 2:1-21.

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink

offering unto the LORD your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people. Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things.

This supernatural rank keeping army will make an entrance into this world during a specific period of time during the time of Jacob's trouble. It concerns a battle that deals with the nation of Israel and those nations gathered in the Middle East to annihilate Israel. The location of this battle is in the holy mountain in Zion where the much spoken trumpet associated with Israel during battle calls is once again employed. The event during that day is a doom's day scenario where it is called a day of darkness and of gloominess. It is a day of dark clouds and of thick darkness and such description of the darkness provides an ominous account of judgment and a day of reckoning where men on earth would be severely dealt with after the many years of grace have been exhausted. This battle involves a great and strong people that have never before seen on earth that leaves behind them a trail of a destruction resembling a desolate wilderness and nothing shall escape them during their appearance.

The description of this army is something unheard of for they have the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, they shall run. But their running will be like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains and they shall leap. But their movement is like the noise of a flame of fire that devours the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Such an army has never before appeared on earth.

The terror on the faces of the people before this army is much pained and of darkness. It must be a terrifying time for the inhabitants on earth having to face this supernatural army that would not break rank. This army of supernatural troopers shall run like mighty men. They shall climb the wall like men of war and they shall march every one on his ways but most importantly, they shall not break their ranks. These troopers are invincible and cannot be hurt during the battle. There will be no place where access will be denied to them for they shall run to and fro in the city and they shall run upon the wall and they shall climb up upon the houses. They shall enter in at the windows like a thief. No equipment is mentioned that they employed during this terrible time of battle but the earth shall quake before them and the heavens shall tremble. The sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. What astonishing description for a battle that takes place on earth and till this time no such army has ever been seen on planet Earth.

This is the computer gamers' dream of endless lives and unlimited ammunitions where they could annihilate their enemies at will where they will never be hurt or die. What fallen men do not know or believe is that such a scenario is coming. Truth is indeed stranger than fiction. The Holy Bible gives advance revelation of a coming day where this supernatural army that could keep rank will make an appearance on earth to execute judgment on earth concerning Israel and the nations on earth. This army is an invincible army of troopers that will keep rank all the way. Unlike the armies of fallen men on earth, this army has no prior military training on earth to get them into what they are and capable of performing. No commandos, rangers, elite troops or special forces from the armies of fallen men will be able to match them in combat. This is a preprogrammed army prepared for a time like this to fulfill the will of Almighty God to bring in a kingdom of peace and blessings where the promise to Abraham in which he would be a blessing to all families on earth would be realized.

It is during this time that the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executes his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible. And the question is who can abide it? The commandment given by the Lord during such a time is that fallen men should turn to the Lord with all their heart with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. Rending of the heart is required and not the usual outward form of rending of garment practiced ever so often by the children of Israel if they sincerely want to turn unto the Lord. This God is

gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and will change His mind on the evil towards them.

This is the time where the Lord will deal with the nation of Israel having set them aside until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. This is the time where the nation will be converted onto the Lord where all Israel shall be saved (Romans 11:26). The instruction for such a time like this is to blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast and call a solemn assembly. This is to gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. This is the time that the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and they will pray, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?"

When this happens, the Lord will then be jealous for his land, and pity his people when He sees the children of Israel seeking after Him in repentance. The Lord will answer and say unto his people, "Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things."

All this takes place with the supernatural rank keeping army ransacking the world and meting out punishment on the people on earth during that day. Soldiers that can keep rank are a formidable force to be reckoned with. Their destruction of the enemies is thorough and swift. No one can stand in the way of an army that can keep rank. It is like the coming of a Tsunami that will wipe them all away. There is no way to penetrate this closely knitted army for there is no weakness for them to exploit. An army that can keep rank is an asset to the nation and a deterrent force to would be aggressors that would do harm to their nation. The Zebulunites famous for such qualities in soldiering should be emulated by Christians. They are role models for Christians as far as courage and loyalty are concerned. Their steadfastness in keeping rank in times of conflict is a virtue Christians soldiers cannot do without.

As a Church, Christians do face the spiritual fiery darts hurled at them by their enemies, especially from the forces of darkness. No doubt they rejoice at the downfall of Christians. The Church is certainly subjected to many fiery darts from the Devil as the Church is the body of Christ and the Bride of Christ. The Church is the Lord's representative on earth to be a light in the world to manifest the true light of Christ to this lost and dying world. It would be exceedingly naïve for Christians to think that they are exempted from warfare resting in the comfort and luxury of their own earthly possessions. Many a times, it is their own wealth that turns out to be their weakest link. Their wealth and fame would become a liability and a hindrance to their spiritual walk with the Lord. All such worldly possessions rob them of a disciplined life to be faithful soldiers for Christ.

Those who are preoccupied with earthly affairs are most at risk to a sudden onslaught from the enemies. Business reversal can take the toll on some Christians. When retrenchments for some folks at their company take place, their faith is weakened to the extent that they could no longer serve the Lord. All unnatural fear sets in and they no longer can fight the spiritual war with the saints. They fail to keep rank and cause the hearts of the brethren to faint with them. Are there fainthearted believers among us? Are there double minded soldiers among us who will flee at a moment's notice? What is needful for our Church today? Are there gaps among us because some did not keep rank and these gaps are now being exploited by our enemies? Would you stand in the gap and keep rank to fight the good fight of faith?

What many Christians fail to realize is that soldiering is part and parcel of a Christian's walk with the Lord. There is no exemption for any Christian to refuse spiritual military service. For all Christians are to be soldiers. No malingering will be tolerated by the Lord. The apostle Paul finds it a point to commend those who are fellow soldiers with him. **Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. (Philippians 2:25) And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house: (Philemon 1:2)** Paul being a soldier in Christ highly values those who are fellow soldiers with him. These are men who kept rank with him in the spiritual war. He also gives instruction to Timothy on how to be a good soldier for the Lord. **Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 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. (2 Timothy 2:3&4)

The point is very clear. To be a good soldier, one must endure hardness. Soldiers are not softies. They must be battle hardened to withstand the real conditions of warfare. No soldier can be of double heart and be double minded. A soldier must stay focus at all time. He cannot afford to think about other earthly things in times of war. He cannot afford to entangle himself with the affairs of this life if he wants to be a good soldier. He cannot worry about the movement of the stock market when he is engaged in warfare. He cannot worry about currency fluctuation during a military operation. He cannot concern himself with the fashion of this world when he is in uniform. He cannot fashion himself after the style of the world when he is wearing his Christian uniform. He cannot lust after the latest fanciful gadgets in the market when he is called up for military duty. So there are many earthly affairs that can hinder a soldier from performing his duty and giving his utmost loyalty to his unit.

The apostle Paul describes his service for the Lord as one who is constantly engaged in battle. He told the Christian in Corinth about the nature of his battle: **I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. (1 Corinthians 9:26&27)** Paul shows his commitment as a good soldier for Christ by keeping his body under subjection. He would not allow any other desires to come between his duty as a soldier for Christ and earthly comfort for his body. He also revealed to them in another epistle on the intensity of this warfare: **For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. (2 Corinthians 7:5)** This is the reality a soldier has to face. However, he has been trained to be disciplined and he has to keep rank in the Lord's army. He cannot find excuses to allow him to withdraw from his rank and file in this army. Everyone has a position to keep, a role to play and an objective to be accomplished. There is no option for failure for the mission given to him.

So with this credential fighting the Lord's battle all those years, Paul could command Timothy: **Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12)** Fighting this spiritual

war is fighting the good fight of faith. This war is worthy to fight for. It is a worthy cause for all Christians to fight for and win the ultimate victory with the Lord's help. Fighting this spiritual war is nothing new. The saints in the past also fought this war and had gone on to victory. They kept the rank and fought gallantly and turned their enemies to flight as we are told: **Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. (Hebrews 11:34)**

Likewise, at the end of his life, the seasoned soldier Paul could say: **I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: (2 Timothy 4:7)** Many people quote this verse in the obituary column of the deceased. How true the deceased lived up to this verse is difficult to substantiate. Notwithstanding, most Christians want to appear to be soldiers with such a verse written on their tombstone. But the actual warfare demands more than just a cursory quotation of a single verse to booster one's standing before true soldiers of the Lord. Only true soldiers who are not of double heart and could keep rank are worthy to wear such a badge of honour.

The Zebulunites are indeed an inspiration to the people of God. They are true soldiers who are not of double heart and could keep rank. They are those who risked their lives for many in the battlefields. They are indeed elite troops that lead the way into battle against the enemies. They are the vanguard of the army and are highly valued and esteemed among the fellow comrades. They show the way forward into victory. No ground will be lost if soldiers of such quality are in the unit.

Christians have much to learn from this noble tribe of Israel. They should learn the ropes in spiritual warfare from their dedication and commitment towards a cause for the greater good for the people of God. When Christians see any gaps, they should fill in if possible. Christians should volunteer and step forward and keep rank in the Lord's army. Christians need to study the Holy Bible to become effective soldiers for the Lord. Christians must be committed to live a godly life so that the excellency of the power of Christ may shine through their earthen vessels. They should aspire to be the three hundred chosen troopers of Gideon to cause chaos and defeat to the enemies of all righteousness and of the cross.

May the church families be strong and not be divided like Reuben hearing the bleating of the sheep instead of engaging the enemies in the frontline. All Christians should desire to emulate the qualities of the tribe of Zebulun who are not of double heart and could keep rank. May the Lord raise up more soldiers that are not of double heart and could keep rank. Would you be among these privileged soldiers of Christ? Let us close rank and keep the most Holy faith in the face of adversity till the Lord returns to catch us all away.

If you have been blessed with the reading of this book and you wish to contact the author, you may write to him at charles@kjb-asia.com.