

March 29

2 Timothy 2:3-4 (NIV) ³ Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.

I just finished reading *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa* by E.B. Sledge. It is a detailed, personal account of the bitter battles fought by the Marines on these two islands. E.B. Sledge was a new recruit when he landed on Peleliu. He kept daily notes in his New Testament, notes that he later used to write the story of the men who fought and died. He told of the bitter fighting, the toll of constant bombardments, the stench from the dead, the attacks by files, the maggots that filled their fox holes, the weeks-long rains that tormented them, and the bitter hand-to-hand combat. He told of walking in knee-deep mud that had hidden the corpses of soldiers from both sides. Sledge presents a non-judgmental account of the two battles that lasted for weeks and months. What hit me was that, despite all of these terrible conditions, they never gave up or thought of quitting because they had been trained to do their duty.

When I read this passage, I immediately thought of Sledge and his story. Paul tells Timothy that we are to join him in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. First, it is difficult for us to see ourselves as soldiers; yet, Paul tells us that we are just that. Once we accept Jesus and follow Him as our Lord, we enter into a spiritual battle between the light and the darkness, between the Truth and lies, and between the spirit and the flesh. Paul tells us that soldiers do not get caught up in civilian affairs. This does not mean we do not listen to the news or avoid being involved. It does mean that the affairs of our Lord Jesus are to be preeminent. First and foremost, we are to please our Lord Jesus Christ. Also, as soldiers, we are to be ready to suffer as good soldiers are willing to do because we believe we are fighting the good fight of faith. E.B. Sledge finished his book with this statement: “Until the millennium arrives and countries cease trying to enslave others, it will be necessary to accept one’s responsibilities and to be willing to make sacrifices for one’s country—as my comrades did. As the troops used to say, ‘If the country is good enough to live in, it’s good enough to fight for.’ With privilege goes responsibility.” This applies to the spiritual fight in our midst. With all that we have received from our Lord and King come great responsibilities.

Sledge, E.B.. *With the Old Breed* (p. 318). Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.