**JOHN’S ADVICE TO MILITARY AND LAW-ENFORCEMENT**

In Luke 3:7-14, John the baptizer is telling everyone what they needed to do to be right with God – i.e. the “fruits of repentance” they needed to bear (v.8). First, he addressed the ***“people”*** (v.10-11), telling them to share what they have. Then, he addressed the ***“tax-collectors”*** (v.12-13), telling them to be honest. And finally, he addressed the ***“soldiers”*** (v.14). These soldiers became disciples of John; then later, of Jesus. I want to study John’s advice to the soldiers in this text. As we study, remember that, in Biblical times, “soldiers” also served as “policemen.”

**“Do not intimidate anyone.”** The word translated “intimidate” means “to shake; or make them shake (in fear).” It is a reference to the ***“abuse of authority.”*** It is a sad truth that, for some people, a little bit of authority “goes to their heads.” We have all seen news-reports about rogue soldiers who have done such things. Closer to home, most of us may have even encountered a police officer or two who likes to “throw their weight around” just because they can. I do ***not*** believe this describes most soldiers and policemen; but it does describe some! Those soldiers and policemen who are prone to intimidate others “just because” are guilty of sin. But when military and law-enforcement behave as they should, law-abiding citizens have nothing to fear (cf. Rm.13:3).

**“Do not… accuse falsely.”** Note carefully that accusations are not forbidden, but ***“false”*** accusations. False accusers usually have an “agenda;” and because of this, they will say anything! Consider, for instance, the outright ***solicitation*** of false accusations against Jesus by the chief priests, elders, and Sanhedrin Council (Mt.26:59-62). In the context of this article, it is no secret that unscrupulous soldiers and police officers will resort to false accusations, planting of evidence, and other shenanigans, to advance an evil agenda. Again, I want to stress that I do ***not*** believe this is true of most soldiers and police officers, but it is true of some! And when law-enforcement officials “bear false witness,” they mock the very law they have sworn to uphold (Rm.13:8-10).

**“Be content with your wages.”** You know, this is good advice for ***any*** worker! Indeed, “wage complaints” are one of the most common complaints of workers (cf. Mt.20:8-13). There have been times in my life when I complained of my wages. Then one day, I read Matthew 20:13-14, which says, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way.” ***Then, it occurred to me that I had agreed to the wage I was making; and if I did not like it, I could work harder to “merit” a higher wage – or change jobs!***The moment I realized that, I looked at my job differently. On the other hand, it should be noted that a soldier’s or policeman’s pay is NOT the best, considering the hard work they do. If anyone gets into such work for the money, they will be sorely disappointed! For this reason, I think most of them serve for higher motives: to help their community or nation; or to see law and order prevail against evil.

**Finally, John “necessary implied” that military and law-enforcement may continue to serve.** Note carefully that these soldiers were NOT told to quit their jobs! Indeed, these very commands (i.e. don’t intimidate, or falsely accuse; and be content with your wages) imply that this kind of work is ***honorable!*** Paul said, “For he (i.e. the agent of civil authority) is ***God’s minister*** to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is ***God’s minister,*** an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil” (Rm.13:4). From the President, to the Governor, to the Mayor, to the “beat cop” – they’re ***all*** God’s ministers! And from the President, to the Generals, to the grunts in the field of battle – ***they too,*** are God’s ministers! As another example, consider that Cornelius was not told to quit being a centurion when he was baptized (Ac.10:1-2,47-48). This is quite logical and Biblical. If I can defend myself, my home, and my family (Lk.11:21), then by extension, I can defend my community (police), and my country (military). If not, why not? The only exception would be the “conscientious objector” (cf. Rm.14:23).

While it is not wrong to be a solider or police officer, those who so serve have the obligation to “do their very best” on the job! Honesty, integrity, and faithfulness to Christ are ALWAYS in order – no matter what your occupation! As I close let me ask: ***“Are you a good soldier of Jesus Christ?”*** (cf. 2Tm.2:3-4).

--Lanny Smith