

Devotion on Hymns of the Church - Hymn 552 – *Soldiers of Christ, Arise* – 5 January 2016, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



*Put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.* Ephesians 6:13

"*Soldiers of Christ, Arise*" is a Wesleyan hymn composed by Charles Wesley in 1749. Musical score is *St. Ethelwald* (Silver Street) by Isaac Smith in 1770. It is an Epiphany hymn and resembles greatly *Onward Christian Soldiers* and *Stand Up O Men of God* for valorous connotation. Every Army needs its rousing music ere the battle is joined, and the Church is no exception. But, unlike *Pickett's Charge* at Gettysburg in which the Confederate band played a waltz, the music must match the tenor of the occasion. This hymn is definitely suited for the Church Militant, and the times are ripe for joining the battle in our day. We have left the spiritual walls of the Church unattended far too long, and our high towers have been overthrown. The enemy walks freely among us, and we have no hope except in God as a Healing Balm for our nation and the Church. The Church is strong in numbers but lacking in true faith and resolution. I have added the last verse which was part of the original but which the 1940 Hymnal committee failed to include.

### **Soldiers of Christ, Arise!**

Soldiers of Christ, arise,  
and put your armor on,  
strong in the strength which God supplies  
through his eternal Son;

Strong in the Lord of hosts,  
and in his mighty power:  
who in the strength of Jesus trusts  
is more than conqueror.

Stand then in his great might,  
with all his strength endured,  
and take, to arm you for the fight,  
the panoply of God.

From strength to strength go on,  
wrestle and fight and pray:  
tread all the powers of darkness down,  
and win the well-fought day.

That, having all things done,  
and all your conflicts past,  
ye may obtain, through Christ alone,  
a crown of joy at last.

Jesus, eternal Son,  
we praise thee and adore,  
who art with God the Father one,  
and Spirit evermore.

But, above all, lay hold on  
faith's victorious shield;  
Armed with that adamant and gold,  
be sure to win the field.

*Soldiers of Christ, arise, and put your armor on, strong in the strength which God supplies through his eternal Son;* Many seemingly formidable in number armies have been vanquished by numerically inferior armies for a variety of reasons, but one of the prevailing essentials of victory on the battlefield has traditionally been to seize the high ground as evidenced by the Confederate slaughter of Union Army soldiers who sought to engage the Confederates at Marye's Heights outside Fredericksburg, and, later, the slaughter of Confederate soldiers under General Pickett who charged the Union Army at Cemetery Ridge under the gallant General Hancock. The high ground provides a favorable purview of the battle area, and places gravity on the side of its possessors for movement of troops and ordnance. For the Army of Christ, the High Ground is faith in the Word of God. FAITH is our shield and buckler; our main strength is TRUTH; RIGHTEOUSNESS is the breastplate to protect our hearts; our FOOTWEAR is the Gospel of Peace when peace is possible; SALVATION is our helmet to protect our understanding; our SWORD is the Word of God; and PRAYERFUL WATCHFULNESS our means of communication in the heat of battle. We do not need only some of the armor of God, but the FULL armor of God!

*Strong in the Lord of hosts, and in his mighty power: who in the strength of Jesus trusts is more than conqueror.* Apart from the Lord of Hosts, there is no strength for the battle. In a righteous cause, the Battle belongs to the Lord. *Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.* (2 Chron 20:15-16) Victory in battle is not the end and purpose of battle, but the peace secured thereby in a righteous cause. To be more than conquerors, as Paul says in Romans 8:37, is not a joy based on bettering a foe in combat, but the love and peace of God following every spiritual victory.

*Stand then in his great might, with all his strength endured, and take, to arm you for the fight, the panoply of God.* Stand in the might of the Lord and not the frailty of your own strength. Behind the closed door of the Ark of Christ is perfect security. Arrayed in the resplendent and gleaming attire of Christ, no darts of the Enemy can penetrate.

*From strength to strength go on, wrestle and fight and pray: tread all the powers*

*of darkness down, and win the well-fought day.* Elated at our triumphs of initial battle, we are emboldened forward to trample down the walls of darkness and win, not only the next battle, but the day itself. Then will come well-deserved rest and sleep.

*That, having all things done, and all your conflicts past, ye may obtain, through Christ alone, a crown of joy at last.* Crowns of battle are not given until valor is demonstrated on the battlefield. I do earnestly covet that crown of joy, and pray that my own works may not merit only a pitiful stocking-cap of patched fur. Our war ribbons in heaven will be our spiritual battle scars.

*Jesus, eternal Son, we praise thee and adore, who art with God the Father one, and Spirit evermore.* Herein is a tribute to the ONENESS of the Holy Trinity. If God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are ONE in Will, Purpose, and Action, we had best be ONE with Christ and, thereby, ONE with the Godhead.

*But, above all, lay hold on faith's victorious shield; Armed with that adamant and gold, be sure to win the field.* In over-running the misappropriated ground of the enemy, we might think to take those articles of war he left behind on the battlefield and turn them against the malicious foe. As John Milton says in *Paradise Lost*: *Sa-tan, with vast and haugh-ty strides ad-vanced, Came to-wer-ing, armed in ad-a-mant and gold.* This is Wesley's implication in saying that we turn Sa-tan's equipment against him. Of course, the Army of Christ has no logistical need for the implements of war scattered abroad and deserted by the enemy. They are weapons without power or effect if our superior ordnance of the spirit is employed to the glory of God.