

Swept off your Feet

Beyond Worship-as-Usual

Connecting with God for a Strong Finish

CHAPTER 35

Warrior Monks

The Knights Hospitallers



A few hundred worshipping warriors saved western civilization from the most powerful army in the world. On three occasions, the Knights Hospitallers fought valiantly against a seemingly dominant Ottoman Empire. Considered “archaic relics of the past”, these warrior-monks stood in the gap with heroic force and prevailed for the sake of their European brothers and sisters.¹



Each stand by these courageous monks averted Islam’s assault against a divided Europe. Without their strength and bravery to resist Muslim aggression, the religious and political climate in the west and throughout the world would be dramatically dif-

ferent.

In 1480, Sultan Mehmet commanded 160 Ottoman ships and 70,000 warriors against the Isle of Rhodes.² From this strategic island, the Knights Hospitallers had disrupted supply routes critical for advancing

¹ Rick Joyner, *Courage that Changed the World*, MorningStar, Wilkesboro, 1997.

² [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Rhodes_\(1480\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Rhodes_(1480)) (4-16-2012)

Turkish armies in their conquest of Europe. Grand Master Pierre d'Aubusson and his brother Antoine led 600 knights and 2,000 militia-men in a stunning victory over the Ottomans. They withstood the largest known naval bombardment in history and prevailed triumphantly.



In 1522, Suleiman the Magnificent sent 400 Ottoman ships and 100,000 men against Rhodes under the command of Mustafa Pasha and Ahmed Pasha.³ Grand Master Philippe Villiers de L'Isle-Adam defended Rhodes with 7,500 men including 700 Knights Hospitallers. Europe offered no support as France and Spain were at war, the Church faltered with division, and Italy was broke. After incurring 20,000 casualties in six months, Sultan Suleiman offered the Knights Hospitallers a generous truce. Suleiman took control of Rhodes and allowed the survivors to resettle on Malta.



Malta
2015

In 1565, Sultan Kanunî Suleiman sent 48,000 men to besiege Malta.⁴ His imposing Turkish Armada led by Dragut represented the largest naval force assembled to date with 193 vessels. Once again, Grand Master Jean Parisot de laValette, 500 Knights, 5,000 soldiers (Maltese, Spanish, Greek, Sicilian, and Italian), and 600 servants prevailed. This stunning

³ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Rhodes_\(1522\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Rhodes_(1522)) (4-16-2012)

⁴ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Malta_\(1565\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Malta_(1565)) (4-16-2012)

victory ignited hope throughout Europe. It conquered the terrifying fear of Ottoman invincibility during the sixteenth-century. According to Voltaire, “Nothing is better known than the siege of Malta”.⁵

Novel Weapons Await Discovery



The Knights Hospitallers used more than conventional weapons to defend Europe against Islamic invaders. Unwavering faith fortified these monastic servants with inexplicable courage, compassion, and strength. Established as the Sovereign Order of the Knights of Saint John (the Baptist), they protected and ministered to Christian pilgrims visiting the Holy Land during the 11th Century. As devout Hospitallers, their primary mission focused on healing the sick and caring for the poor. These Knights operated a hospital in Rhodes with separate wards for infectious disease and maternity care. On Malta, they extended health care to the Maltese people and developed a renowned school of anatomy and surgery. During the 18th century, they built the longest room in Europe, which served as a hospital. Their motto continues to be:

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum

For the Faith and in the Service of Humanity

Prepare for War

God has a reputation for solving lopsided military conflicts with creative solutions. Joshua repeatedly marched his forces around Jericho before trumpets sounded, troops shouted, and impenetrable walls crumbled. As a young shepherd, David slung a single stone to address a gigantic international conflict.⁶ Gideon’s small band of 300 soldiers employed clay pots, torches, and horns to rout a massive force estimated to be 135,000 since 120,000 died and 15,000 survived.⁷

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Siege_of_Malta accessed 10-1-2015

⁶ 1 Samuel 17

⁷ Judges 8:10 ESV

Spiritual adversity fuels material mayhem as tyrants brutalize nations with bombs, bullets, and terror. Ordinary men, women, and children are currently fighting against horrific evil. Their daily schedule features active duty combat. Operating from a pure heart with a good conscience and a sincere faith, worshipers are connecting with God for war.⁸ Of necessity, they find themselves increasingly engaged in mortal combat.

Considering the past, worshipping warriors may once again thrust themselves into the fray with deadly force. Two world wars and numerous armed conflicts remind us that lethal force on a massive scale may be required. Despite pleas for peace, aggressive militants warrant a strong response. Lessons from tyrants and terrorists teach us that protecting lives and preserving liberty requires strong action guided by sound wisdom. The near future does not promise to be different. Throughout history, God has advocated, and at times commanded military force with great courage.

God holds the solution for every quarrel, conflict, and dispute. Nonetheless, He specifically warned the nations to “*prepare for war*”!⁹ Perhaps we should take Him seriously and prepare ourselves better. As long as threats arise, how, when, where, and if we should fight remains a complex topic of debate.

Rather than killing one another with bombs and bullets, God may yet reveal innovative solutions to those who are listening. Non-lethal weapons await discovery and deployment. Avoiding deadly force may be possible as the Holy Spirit inspires creative diplomacy, breakthrough technologies, and innovative military tactics.

[Previous Chapter](#)

[Resource Page](#)

[Top](#)

[Next Chapter](#)

⁸ 1 Timothy 1:5 NIV

⁹ Joel 2:9