

Swept off your Feet

Beyond Worship-as-Usual

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CHAPTER 44

Warrior Monks

The Knights Hospitallers



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 in Christ.¹

Each defensive stand averted Islam’s aggressive assault against a divided Europe. Without their strength, courage, and resolve to resist Muslim aggression, the religious and political climate in the west and throughout the world would be drastically different.



In 1480, Sultan Mehmet commanded 160 ships and 70,000 warriors against the Isle of Rhodes.² From this tiny island, the Knights Hospitallers had disrupted supply routes critical for advancing Turkish armies in their conquest of Europe. Grand Master Pierre d’Aubusson and his brother Antoine led 600 knights and 2,000 militiamen 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 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

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)

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

Knights Hospitallers. Europe offered no support as France and Spain were at war, the Church faltered with division, and Italy was bankrupt. After incurring 20,000 casualties in six months, Sultan Suleiman offered the Knights Hospitallers a generous truce. The Ottomans took control of Rhodes and allowed the survivors to resettle in Malta where they reestablished themselves in 1630.

In 1565 (35 years later), Sultan Kanunî Suleiman sent 48,000 men to besiege Malta.⁴ Led by Dragut, this imposing Turkish Armada represented the largest naval force assembled to date with 193 warships. Once again, Grand Master Jean



Parisot de laValette, prevailed with 500 Knights, 2,000 soldiers, (Italian, Spanish, Greek, Sicilian, and Maltese), 100 servants, 500 galley slaves and 3,000 Maltese citizens. Their stunning victory ignited hope throughout Europe and extinguished the 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 and dauntless resolve fortified these monastic servants with inexplicable strength, courage, and comfort. 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 innovative 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

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

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Siege_of_Malta accessed 11-17-20

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 beating lopsided military odds with creative solutions. Joshua marched Israeli forces around Jericho until trumpets sounded, troops shouted, and its impenetrable walls crumbled. As a young shepherd, David slung a single stone to defeat a gigantic international nemesis.⁶ Gideon's 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

Spiritual adversity fuels material mayhem as tyrants brutalize nations with bombs and bullets. Ordinary men, women, and children are currently fighting horrific evil around the world. Their daily routine 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 participating in mortal combat.



Considering the past, worshiping 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 decisive 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 applied with great courage.

For every quarrel, conflict, and dispute, God holds the solution and controls the narrative. He specifically warned the nations to “*prepare for war*”!⁹ Perhaps we should take Him more seriously and prepare ourselves better. As long as cred-

⁶ 1 Samuel 17

⁷ Judges 8:10 ESV

⁸ 1 Timothy 1:5 NIV

⁹ Joel 2:9

ible threats arise, when, where, how, and if we should fight remains a 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 novel military tactics.

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