

HONORING FALLEN SOLDIERS

INTRO: I had every intention of preaching from Colossians 3 today—right up until Saturday morning—but really felt the Lord wanted me **to hold off** on a sermon about **husbands being not bitter** against their wives until **next** week. Also, with this year being the 250th anniversary of the birth of our nation—and the fact that we often forget that “freedom isn’t free”—I sensed the Lord’s leading to bring a Memorial Day message.

Monday—Memorial Day—is a day set aside to **commemorate** those who have lost their lives on the battlefield while defending our freedom both home and abroad. All told, **over 1 million American service members** have lost their lives from the Revolutionary War to the present. Here are five deadliest wars, beginning with the 5th. Please know that the number of fatalities varies, depending upon the source. You can literally look at 5 different sources and come up with 5 different sets of numbers!

5. Korean War (1950-1953) approximate fatalities: 36,516 (That number does not include the more than 20,000 that died from injuries not directly combat related).
4. Vietnam War (1965-1973) approximate fatalities: 58,209
3. World War I (1917-1918) approximately fatalities: 116,516
2. World War II (1939-1945) approximate fatalities: 405,399
1. American Civil War (1861-1865) approximate fatalities: 620,000. That number, however, could be low. A “history demographer by the name of J. David Hacker, by using census data, believes the true number is at least 750,000 and perhaps as high as 850,000. He estimates that more than 20% of men born in the South who were aged 20 to 24 in 1860 died as a result of the war.”

(<https://247wallst.com/special-report/2023/06/06/americans-died-in-major-war-1775/>)

Instead of focusing on US history, though, we are going to look at how David—who God Himself calls “a man after mine own heart”—**honored fallen soldiers** of the nation of Israel. And as we do that, we will see some principles that we can apply to our own lives. So please take your Bibles and turn to II Samuel 1 and follow along as I read verses 1-12.

Notice first, **1. David’s respect for the position**

--Look at what it says in verses 13-16. Twice in the verses I just read—vss 14 and 16—David is puzzled as to why the Amalekite was not afraid to “stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed.”

--David himself had respect for Saul’s position as king and could have taken Saul’s life twice:

--Turn back a few pages to I Samuel 24; notice what it says in vss 1-8.

You got the picture, right? David’s men wanted David’s permission to kill Saul. David wouldn’t allow them to. **Why?** He says why in vs 6: “The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord’s anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.”

He says basically the same thing in vs 10; notice what it says.

Now turn to I Samuel 26 where again we see David with an opportunity to take Saul’s life. Please follow along as I read verses 1-8. Pretty exciting—and probably scary! David and Abi’shai (Awb ishi) sneak into the camp of Saul’s army and got close enough to take Saul’s spear. Abi’shai sought David’s permission to “smite” Saul with the spear once because God had delivered David’s enemy into his hand.

David’s reply? Notice what it says in verses 9-11. David here again—twice—says: “Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless? (verses 9 and 11).

David’s reverence and respect for the office is fascinating to me for two reasons:

A. David had respect in spite of the **man** in the position

--What kind of man was Saul? In I Samuel 15, we see Saul failing to obey what God told him to do.

--On top of that, he argues with Samuel and says he **did obey** before finally admitting that he didn't! Instead of repenting, though, he **blames the people** for his disobedience.

--The result of his disobedience? **I Samuel 15:23b** "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king."

--But instead of repenting after this pronouncement from God through Samuel, Saul later tries to kill David by throwing a spear at him (I Samuel 19:10-11).

--Shortly after that, Saul sends messengers to watch David's house to kill him when he came out in the morning. He escaped because his wife—who was also Saul's daughter—heard about it and helped him escape out of the window that night (I Samuel 19:12-17).

--And after this, Saul consults with a witch because God had departed from him. He asks the witch to call up Samuel from the dead and she does—but it freaks her out!

--So here's Saul—who wouldn't listen to Samuel when he was alive—now wants to listen to him after he is dead! Samuel's response is seen in **I Samuel 28:16** "Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?"

I could go on, but the point is already obvious: Saul was a disobedient, self-serving, ungodly man! And yet, David **respected the office** of the king in spite of the man that held the office!

Sadly, that's not very common in this day and age!

--People don't respect the office of the President—or people in uniform—regardless of whether it is policemen—or men and women in the Armed Forces.

--What about you? Do you show respect to those in authority? God calls us to do that—and also call us to **pray for those** in authority over us.

Here's a second reason I find David's respect for Saul as king so fascinating...

B. David had respect in spite of the *promise made to him!*

--Shortly after Samuel told Saul that he was done being king, God had Samuel anoint **David** as king.

--We find that in I Samuel 16—before David killed Goliath—meaning he was probably about **15** years old! And from II Samuel 5:4, we know that David was **30** years old when he began to reign, meaning he waited **15 years** to take the throne!

--Talk about patience—and a contentedness to wait on God and God's timing!

--We aren't very good at that, are we? Our tendency is to "take matters into our own hands."

--I can't help but think that most of us—if we had been in David's shoes—would have had Saul killed so we could start being king!

--But God molds us through **suffering**—and **waiting**—and David was **a better king** because of the molding process than he would have been otherwise!

Now, let's turn back to II Samuel 1 again and consider...

2. David's remorse over the death of Saul and Jonathan

--Notice again what it says in verses 11-12. Was David a "politician" and trying to win those who had a strong allegiance to Saul? Can't rule it out as a possibility, but I do believe he was genuine in his grieving.

--Now vs 17—"And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son"

* No gloating, no "Praise the Lord, he's dead"

* No "hallelujah; it is finally MY turn!"

--In vs 19, David calls them "the beauty of Israel"—and "the mighty"

--In vs 20, David says 'Don't proclaim it in the cities of Philistia because we don't want them celebrating!'

--Notice vs 24, "Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul"

--In vs 26, we have special mourning for Jonathan: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan"

--And in vs 27, David again said, "How are the mighty fallen..."

--We also know from II Samuel 2:5-6 that David blessed and rewarded the men of Jabesh-Gilead for retrieving the bodies of Saul and Jonathan out of the land of the Philistines

--On top of that, David showed kindness to Jonathan's son Mephibosheth. **II Sam 9:1** "And David said, Is there yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

David—of course—**knew Saul and Jonathan** and was obviously impacted by their death—especially Jonathan's. Most of us, however, probably don't have **close friends**—or family members—who lost their lives while serving our country. And yet, we do know that those who lost their lives were close to someone—and we should "mourn with those that mourn and weep with those that weep."

Thirdly, we see...**3. David's reminder of the good that Saul and Jonathan had done**

A. They were great warriors

--We see that in vs 22; notice what it says: "the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty." In other words, they were **effective fighters!**

--Shortly after Saul became king, the Ammonites came against God's people in Jabesh. The men of Jabesh—instead of going to war with them—asked to make a peace treaty with them. The Ammonites agreed under one condition—if they could take out the right eye of all the men of Jabesh "for a reproach upon all Israel" (I Sam 11:2).

--Saul got news of this, assembled an army of 300,000, and rescued the inhabitants of Jabesh!

--We also know that Saul was a great warrior because after returning from battles with the Philistines, the women sang and danced in the streets, saying, "Saul has slain his thousands!" (I Sam 18:7; 29:5)

Not only were they great warriors, David mourned for them because...

B. They were great providers

We see that in vs 24: "Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel." In other words, David was reminding them that they had prospered when Saul was king. In essence, he is saying 'Don't forget that—and don't take it for granted.'

Do we—in the United States of America—have great warriors—and a great military? We do, don't we? I typed into my internet "search engine" this question: "What is the world's view of the United States military?"

The answer: "The United States military is widely seen as the most powerful in the world, with unmatched technological capabilities, a massive defense budget, and a global network of bases (polsci.institute+1). The U.S. spends more on defense than the next ten countries combined, and maintains military presence in over 80 countries (govfacts.org). This dominance is often viewed as a cornerstone of U.S. global influence, enabling it to project power, deter threats, and shape international order (polsci.institute+1)."

The benefits of having great warriors—and a great military—are the freedoms we enjoy each and every day—and often take for granted. And because of that, we should be thankful—and grateful to those who serve.

Although some members of the military are born-again believers, most are not! And yet, many of them **serve their country** more sacrificially than many believers **serve Christ!**

Lastly—and obviously not from this passage—I want us to consider...

4. David's relative that will reign forever

--**Who** is David's relative that will reign forever?

--We have the answer in the angel Gabriel's words to Mary as found in **Luke 1:31-33** "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt **call His name Jesus**.³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him **the throne of His father David**:³³ And He shall **reign over the house** of Jacob for ever; and of His **kingdom there shall be no end**."

--The relative of David that will reign forever is **obviously Jesus!**

--Why talk about **Jesus** on Memorial Day weekend? Because we are commemorating the sacrifice of soldiers and the freedoms that came about—and remain—because of their sacrifice!

--And there is no Greater Warrior...who sacrificed **more**...and brought about a **greater freedom**...and **everlasting good**...than what Jesus accomplished in sacrificing Himself for us on the Cross!

--Is not the **sacrifice of God Himself**—for His sinful creation—a **greater sacrifice** than **one man** for another?

--Is not **freedom from hell**—the eternal separation from God because of our sins—greater than **freedom from oppression** or slavery?

--Is not **eternal life forever with God** in a place of happiness and perfection far better than the **temporary good** we experience here on earth?

--But what about **Jesus as a Warrior**? Take your Bibles and turn to Revelation 19. I'm not sure why, but I've gotten into more conversations about the end-times lately than it seems I ever have!

--Vs 11 (read). "Christ—the Faithful and True"—comes to judge and make war.

--In vs 13, His name is called "The Word of God"—another reference to Jesus.

--Vs 14. "And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, what and clean." Who are the armies that are in heaven—that follow Christ from heaven to earth?

--The **bride of Christ**, meaning born-again, blood-bought children of God!

--How do you know that, Pastor? What are you basing it on?

--Look at what it says in verses 7-9. Here we see the church—the bride of Christ—is in heaven for the marriage supper of the Lamb—and they are clothed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness **of saints** (not angels).

--**Who** comes down with Jesus in vs 14? Armies...which were in heaven...that were clothed in fine linen, white and clean—which certainly seems to be the same group referred to in verses 7-9!

--**How and when** did the bride of Christ go to heaven? We were **raptured before** the beginning of the 7-year Tribulation on earth!

--And we come back Christ to witness the Battle of Armageddon—and rule with Him for 1000 years after the Battle of Armageddon is over!

--Look at the **"warrior" description** of Christ in verses 15-16.

--Now vs 19. Notice the war is not just against Christ—it is also **against His army**—meaning us!

--In vs 20, we see that the beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire.

--Now vs 21. See why I say we are **spectators**?

--What happens after that?

--Satan is bound for a thousand years (Rev 20:1-3)—and we rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years (Rev 20:6).

--Satan is loosed (Rev 20:7), there's one more battle (Rev 20:9), Satan is thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10), and the **unsaved dead** stand before God where they are judged **for every sin** they committed while alive on earth (vss 11-14).

--And then we have the somber words of **Revelation 20:15** "And whosoever was not found in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

So what about you? Is **your name** written in the book of life? It can be, but the Divine Warrior—who is also the Lamb—has to **add your name** to the book because it's His book!

--**How** do you get your name in the Lamb's book?

--Come to Him in humility and repentance, acknowledging your sin and need for mercy and forgiveness. But also come to Him in faith, believing that Christ took the punishment for your sin...and paid it in full...and will receive you when you call upon Him.

Romans 10:13 "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

--Have you done that?

If not, why not do that today?

So what would God have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. First—as already mentioned—make sure your name is in the Lamb's book of Life!
2. Second, **respect** those that God has placed in positions of authority over you—like David did! And that doesn't mean just the President and politicians—it also means the police and sheriff's departments!
3. Third, are you **thankful**—to God—that He had you born here in the United States—and not somewhere else? You should be thankful—and you should let Him know that you're thankful!
4. Fourth, don't be **afraid—or overly discouraged**—about what is going on in the world today. Jesus—the Great Warrior—is coming back! Listen for the trumpet!