

Remembering the Fallen

2 Samuel 1:17-27

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 7-1-2012

Introduction – It is important to teach others how to remember America’s fallen soldiers (see vv. 17-18)

Let me begin by reading once again the introduction to David’s Psalm. It’s verses 17-18: **“Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul, and over Jonathan his son. And he told them to teach the children of Judah the Song of the Bow; indeed it is written in the Book of Jasher.”**

A. It is appropriate to honor fallen soldiers who weren’t perfect (v. 17a)

I want to point out four significant things about this introduction that should influence our interpretation: First, David writes this poem not just to memorialize the life and death of his best friend Jonathan (you could expect that), but he also wrote this to memorialize the life and death of Saul. It would have been so easy for David to focus on all the things that Saul did wrong (and there were plenty), and in the process to ignore the things that Saul did right. And we all have a tendency to do that in America. We take sides in politics and then demonize the opposition, and become blind to their good points.

When you’ve got a government as corrupt as our own, it is easy to allow cynicism over national policy to make us cynical over everything that America stands for. And it’s very important that we not allow that to happen. It’s easy to allow the legitimate disgust that we feel over corrupt politicians destroying our nation to begin bleed over into disgust for patriotism as a whole. And the Bible would caution us not to do that. Despite the bum rap that Israel gave David, David was still patriotic to Israel. And this Psalm demonstrates his patriotism. It is easy to allow disagreement over the president’s policies of warfare to make us criticize the soldiers who have suffered under his faulty policies. It is easy to get so discouraged over the secularism in our land that we allow that discouragement to make us cynical over patriotic holidays like Memorial Day or July 4. But three weeks ago I demonstrated from the Old and New Testaments that you can still honor soldiers even when you don’t agree with the wars our nation is fighting. And I think Vision Forum has done a masterful job of tastefully remembering the

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Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

fallen and surviving heroes of World War II in its D-Day series of videos. It's a wonderful series of videos. I think it has the Biblical balance that I will be striving for in today's sermon. So the first thing to note in this introduction is that David pays a tribute to Saul, even though Saul had many weaknesses.

B. We should not glory in the ugliness of war when we honor fallen soldiers – this is a lament (v. 17b)

The second thing to note is that even though David was an enthusiastic soldier, he did not glorify war. This is a lament. It laments wasted lives. It laments the death of soldiers. It laments the ugliness of war. I've known war buffs that do the opposite – they glory in war; they glory in the War Between the States, and you might think that they wish they could start it again. But in doing that they don't actually share the sentiments of that war's greatest generals – from either side. General Robert E. Lee said,

What a cruel thing is war: to separate and destroy families and friends, and mar the purest joys and happiness God has granted us in this world; to fill our hearts with hatred instead of love for our neighbours, and to devastate the fair face of this beautiful world.¹

He did not glory in war. But a General from the Northern armies said much the same. General Sherman said, "War is hell." Though he was brutal, he did not glorify war. The statement was actually an impromptu statement made at the conclusion of a speech to military cadets at the Ohio State Fair in 1880. And let me read to you the context of that quote:

Boys, I've been where you are now and I know just how you feel. It's entirely natural that there should beat in the breast of every one of you a hope and desire that some day you can use the skill you have acquired here. "Suppress it! You don't know the horrible aspects of war. I've been through two wars and I know. I've seen cities and homes in ashes. [Of course, I would point out that he unfairly produced at least some of those ashes after the war. But anyway, he continued:] I've seen thousands of men lying on the ground, their dead faces looking up at the skies. I tell you, war is hell."²

Some of America's greatest mighty men, like General Douglas MacArthur, have said much the same thing. They did not glory in war. If they had to fight, they wanted to fight to win, but recognized war as an ugly business. This Wednesday, America will be 236 years old, and there is much

¹ Letter to his wife on Christmas Day, two weeks after the Battle of Fredericksburg (25 December 1862).

² As quoted in James C. Starbuck, A bicentennial historical sketch of Oakland County, Michigan, 1815-1976 (Oakland County American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1976), p. 56

that we can still celebrate. But we should learn from our founding fathers that war should not be enthusiastically and quickly embraced. On July 4, 1776, fifty-six men signed the Declaration of Independence. And they signed it with the full knowledge that they might indeed suffer, saying at the end of the Declaration, “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.” Sticking by their convictions resulted in untold sufferings for themselves and their families. Of the 56 men, I understand that five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in battle. Another had two sons captured. Nine of the fifty-six died as a result of wounds or hardship brought on by the war. The British sank Carter Braxton’s merchant ships and as a result of the war, this wealthy man died in poverty. When the British General Cornwallis took over Thomas Nelson’s home and made it his headquarters, Nelson told General George Washington to open fire on his home. The home was destroyed, and Nelson was another man who died bankrupt. John Hart was driven from his dying wife as he helped his thirteen children flee for their lives. Everything he owned was destroyed and for over a year he lived in the forest and in caves, finally dying from exhaustion.³ Even wars that are won have a certain degree of sadness and solemnity to them. So the second thing that I want you to notice as we go through this song is that this is a Lament.

C. But neither should we shun war or fail to take pride in our fallen soldiers (v. 17c)

But the third thing to note is that David wanted Israel to learn to value the courage, the valor, the bravery, and other characteristics that were exemplified in Saul and Jonathan. Though he didn’t glorify war, neither did he shun it. War is sometimes a necessity, and the kind of passivism that shrinks from war is even uglier than war itself. Cowardice and compromise is uglier than war. I think that John Stuart Mills was right when he said,

War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no

³ Taken from Kenneth L. Dodge, *Resource*, Sept./ Oct., 1992, p. 5.

chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.⁴

D. We should pass stories of America's heroes on to succeeding generations (v. 17d)

The last thing I want you to note in this introduction is that David wanted the men of Judah to never forget the heroism of men like Saul and Jonathan. And he wanted his men to teach this to the children of Judah. He not only wrote this tribute down, but he included it in the Book of Jasher. Now, the book of Jasher was an ongoing account of the battles of God's people, including its heroes and their exploits. Yes, God's people should have histories of wars, like the book of Jasher. It was a book that is at least as old as Joshua. And the reason I know that is that Joshua included his exploits in the book of Jasher in Joshua 10:13. That means that David is adding to a record that has already spanned 436 years of wars. So generation after generation is hearing about the war heroes of old.

And we too must tell and retell the stories of freedom, patriotism, sacrifice, and courage to our children and our children's children. Tell stories of battles for freedom like that of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce in Scotland. Don't shield your children from such accounts. Let them see role models of heroism. Throughout this sermon, I hope to apply the principles of this passage with stories from our own country's history. Stories like that of Lieutenant Commander Butch O'Hare.

Butch O'Hare was a fighter pilot assigned to the aircraft carrier Lexington in the South Pacific. One day his entire squadron was sent on a mission. After he was airborne, he looked at his fuel gauge and realized that someone had forgotten to top off his fuel tank. He would not have enough fuel to complete his mission and get back to his ship. His flight leader told him to return to the carrier. Reluctantly, he dropped out of formation and headed back to the fleet. As he was returning to the mother ship he saw something that turned his blood cold. A squadron of Japanese aircraft were speeding their way toward the American fleet.

The American fighters were gone on a sortie, and the fleet was defenseless. He couldn't reach his squadron and bring them back in time to save the fleet. Nor could he warn the fleet of the approaching danger. There was only one thing to do. He must somehow divert them from the fleet. Laying aside all thoughts of personal safety, he dove into the formation of Japanese planes. Wing-mounted 50 caliber's blazed as he charged in, attacking one surprised enemy plane and then another. Butch wove in and out of the now broken formation and fired at as many planes as possible until all his ammunition was finally spent. Undaunted, he

⁴ John Stuart Mill, as quoted in the Congressional Record, Volume 153, Part 12, June 18, 2007, p. 16180. Google Books reprint.

continued the assault. He dove at the planes, trying to clip a wing or tail in hopes of damaging as many enemy planes as possible and rendering them unfit to fly.

Finally, the exasperated Japanese squadron took off in another direction. Deeply relieved, Butch O'Hare and his tattered fighter limped back to the carrier. Upon arrival he reported in and related the event surrounding his return.

The film from the gun-camera mounted on his plane told the tale. It showed the extent of Butch's daring attempt to protect his fleet. He had in fact destroyed five enemy aircraft.

This took place on February 20, 1942, and for that action Butch became the Navy's first Ace of WW II, and the first Naval Aviator to win the Congressional Medal of Honor. A year later Butch was killed in aerial combat at the age of 29. His home town would not allow the memory of this WW II hero to fade, and today, O'Hare Airport in Chicago is named in tribute to the courage of this great man.⁵

You look at men like that, whether they were believers or unbelievers, and you can teach your children a number of character lessons. Don't let those stories go wasted.

I. Teach your children how to respect America's fallen soldiers (see vv. 19-21)

Now, I am only going to highlight four points on this sermon. And since David commanded his men to teach this song to the children of Judah, I've phrased each of these points as things that we can teach to our children. First, teach your children how to respect America's fallen soldiers. The younger generation is clueless on how to respect the heroes of the past. We need to teach them. It's not going to automatically happen. So I'm going to give you four sub points that shows how we can teach such respect for fallen soldiers to our children.

A. While we should make heroes, we should not engage in hero worship (v. 19b)

David begins by saying, "**The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen.**" Three times that phrase, "how the mighty have fallen" is repeated to teach us that death comes to all – to even the mightiest of men. And to me this implies first, that though we should make heroes, we should not engage in hero worship. We are all dust, and to dust we will return. We do not put our hope for America's future in our heroes; we put it in the Lord.

⁵ At <http://www.ussmtmckinley.com/crew/heroes.shtml>

B. But our hearts should be drawn out by the heroic characteristics of such men (v. 19a)

But, here is the second subpoint: though we do not worship heroes, we should find our hearts being drawn out in some way to their sacrifices, heroism, or whatever else it is that makes them beautiful and worth emulating. He says, **“the beauty of Israel is slain on your high places!”** There is a certain sense in which the ugliness of Saul’s character was tempered by something admirable; something beautiful. God *Himself* says in this inspired Psalm that there was something beautiful about Saul.

And there are heroes in America’s wars who can gain our respect, even if they had weak and flawed characters. For example, there is much that can be admired in President Andrew Jackson. He is definitely not my favorite president, because he has a lot of glaring weaknesses, just like Saul. But that is why I picked him. It would be so easy to overlook the great things in his life if we focused only on his problems: and he had plenty of problems. We cannot respect his volatile temper or his quickness to enter duals. In fact he had a bullet in his chest for most of his life from one of those duals. It’s hard for me to respect a man who murdered others in duals. But he was a man of his age. He didn’t see it that way. What do we say about the ethnic cleansing of Indians that he engaged in? In many ways he is like Saul, a person that I can only reluctantly admire. I disagree with his opinion that States cannot nullify Federal law. Of course they can! And there are many other things that I disagree with. But I cannot help but admire this man’s heroism in the battle of New Orleans, or his taking Congress on by dismantling the central bank. I think it is the latter that is his lasting legacy, but he had other characteristics that could be respected.

C. It should grieve us when the enemy can rejoice over us spiritually or militarily (v. 20)

The third aspect of respecting America’s heroes is to not relish any badmouthing that the enemies of America might bring against such men. Verse 20 says, **“Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon – Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.”** One commentary suggested that the Philistine soldiers were already returning to their towns, filtering past the ruins of Ziklag. And David is reminded that this defeat will only add boldness to the Philistine attacks against his country. I guess that’s possible. But there is more to it than that. This is not just a military issue. He says, **“Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the**

uncircumcised triumph.” How would women triumph over Israel? Not militarily. This is a moral triumph and a triumph of propaganda. And indeed in the last chapter of 1 Samuel we saw that the Philistine propaganda machine was already declaring that the God of Israel was weak compared to the gods of the Philistines. It was a horrible *testimony* that David was concerned about.

And in the same way, it grieves me when international students are taught at UNO that our economic woes are because of too much free market. What!? Free Market?!! No! It's *Fascism* that is destroying our nation, not the free market. And so, I would say, "Tell it not in Gath that our problems are due to free market economics." That kind of propaganda should grieve us. It grieves me when Muslims often associate all the moral filth that Hollywood exports with Christianity. But they do it all the time. They still think of America as a Christian nation, and blame all that is horrible in the movies upon Christianity itself. And we need to say, "Tell it not in Gath that America's media filth flows from Christianity." So David is defending Saul and Jonathan against revisionist histories that would make them and Israel seem worse than they were. And we on our part must not make America worse than it is in our fight against America's unconstitutional problems. I would still much rather live in America than virtually any other country in the world.

D. Let landmarks and memorials be a part of paying your respects (v. 21)

The fourth way to respect fallen soldiers is by letting landmarks and memorials become a part of paying our respects to them. Verse 21 says, **“O mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew nor rain upon you, nor fields of offerings. For the shield of the mighty is cast away there! The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.”** It's beautiful language. I won't get into all of the poetic meaning of it. But from this time on David was going to remember Gilboa like Canadians remember Flanders Fields and like Americans remember Omaha Beach. And actually, Gilboa became a memorial much like the Vietnam Memorial, or the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Every time David would visit or think about Gilboa, he would think about the mighty men who had tragically fallen there.

And in your travels, it would be wise to teach your children to respect America's heroes by visiting various war monuments. Visiting such sites used to be called “paying your respects,” and too many of our younger generation don't know how to show this kind of respect. We've lost

something. When I was younger, there were a lot more people who were sentimental enough to put flowers on the graves of relatives who had died in war, or to put flowers on the memorials of those who had given their lives for our country.

If you can take your children back in time and use these four subpoints, you will be teaching them how to show respect in a generation that knows little about respecting our war heroes or appreciating the freedoms that we have as a result of their sacrifices.

II. Teach your children how to honor the heroism of America's fallen soldiers (vv. 22-23)

The second main thing that I would encourage you to do is to teach your children how to honor the heroism of America's fallen soldiers. And I am distinguishing this from the first point. The first point is respecting them as persons. The second point is honoring them by talking about what they have done. What is it that makes them heroes? And I have six subpoints for Roman numeral II.

A. You don't need to sanitize the gory ugliness of war (v. 22a-b)

First, you don't honor America's fallen heroes by sanitizing your stories and by avoiding the ugliness of war. Verse 22 says, **"From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, and the sword of Saul did not return empty."** Notice the first two phrases: they are kind of gross - **"From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty..."** There are certain aspects to telling a good war story that are gory, and we don't have to be shy about telling our children about the enormous pain and savagery of war. It honors the fallen soldiers when we tell the next generation both the injuries that they sustained as well as the enormous damage that they inflicted upon the enemy. This is not glorying in war. This is simply being realistic about both the bravery and sacrifices of such men and the fact that we should not cherish war in our honoring of such heroes. They are heroes precisely because they endured horror.

B. It honors our heroes to make mention of the heroism of the enemy (v. 22b)

Second, I want you to notice that David honored Saul and Jonathan by honoring the enemy. Notice in verse 22 that he calls the enemy **"the mighty."** The blood and fat of the enemy that smeared the landscape was not the blood and fat of weaklings. Saul and Jonathan in their lifetime had taken down many mighty, and even in this last battle they had taken down some

mighty men of battle. You don't honor the fallen soldiers by belittling the enemy. You don't say, "Look at how amazing our men are. They have taken out several poorly armed weaklings." No. Our heroes are most honored when you are honest about the heroism of men on the other side.

And I think Vision Forum's D-Day account did this well by showing the honorable characteristics of General Rommel, Germany's best General. Rommel was a man who won the respect of both his own troops as well as his enemy. Now, he had his faults too, but he was a remarkable General. They called him the desert fox because of his battles in Africa. And he was a man of principle. He refused to obey the orders that came down to kill captured commandos, Jews, and civilians in all theatres of his command. He did not believe such demands were lawful, and he risked the ire of Hitler by refusing to obey the commands. In fact, his consistent character led him to join the attempt to overthrow Hitler, the failure of which led to his own death. Many other remarkable mighty men can be found amongst America's enemies. And mentioning those mighty men and their exploits not only highlights the remarkable nature of our own heroes who fought them, but shows a balanced fairness that will keep our children from thinking we are propagandists. During our War for Independence, the Brits had some remarkably brave and decent men. Otto Scott does a good job of honoring the enemy, and he felt that the movie Patriot made all Brits look like scoundrels. There were some Brits who were scoundrels. But when you are doing providential history, don't downplay the enemy's heroism or good character.

C. There is no need for exaggeration (v. 22c-d)

Third, you don't honor America's heroes by exaggeration, but you honor them by focus. David honored the courage of Jonathan. He did not flee. But I want you to notice that he couldn't pay the same tribute to Saul in this last battle. Nevertheless, he at least highlights the fact that Saul's sword took out some Philistines before he retreated. But he doesn't say of Saul that his sword did not turn back. It did turn back. And this brief retelling shows me that we do not honor our heroes by exaggerating their virtues, but we honor them by focusing on their virtues. When you go to a funeral, you don't highlight everything they did bad, do you? You might mention some of the obvious bad things, but your focus is normally elsewhere. Of course, we can go to the opposite extreme. I've been to funerals where the praise was false. You couldn't even recognize the person who was being painted so pure. It seemed wrong.

And when we honor war heroes, we need to avoid exaggeration in either direction. Sometimes the exaggerated praise that you read of some of America's heroes smacks of hero worship. Clark Clifford shared a story about his former boss, Harry S. Truman that made him laugh. At one of the staff meetings that he attended, a mail clerk brought in a lavender envelope with a regal seal and flowing with purple ribbons. Opening it, the President found a letter from King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, whose salutation began, "Your Magnificence." Truman repeated the phrase out loud, "Your Magnificence." And laughing he went on to say, "I like that. I don't know what you guys call me when I'm not here, but it's okay if you refer to me from now as 'His Magnificence.'" This exaggerated praise was not honor. It was empty flattery. And it showed itself to be empty after Truman sent a message to the United Nations supporting the admission of 100,000 Jews into Palestine, because soon afterwards he received another letter from King Ibn Saud that simply began, "Dear Mr. President." So while praise of specific actions of the fallen is appropriate, our praise should not resort to lies, exaggeration, and flattery, as so many stories of our presidents and military have. Anyway, to summarize, praise our heroes, but don't ignore their faults. It's obvious that Saul does not receive the same praise that Jonathan did. In fact, his fleeing is hinted at.

D. Paint a picture of character issues worth imitating (v. 22a)

Verse 23: "**Saul and Jonathan were beloved and pleasant in their lives.**" This is probably referring to the earlier days of Saul's life before the paranoia and evil spirit characterized him. And the early part of 1 Samuel showed Saul could be gracious, and he was definitely well loved. And I've summarized this point in your outlines as "Paint a picture of character issues worth imitating." Not all heroes have good character as a whole, though even then, there may be a character trait or two that is worth pointing to. Some of America's heroes were jerks and hated by their troops, but even their troops recognized their bravery, endurance, or patience. Some were incredibly loved by their men. I think that General Robert E. Lee had it all. Even his enemies could have described him with the words I just read from verse 23. And let me read one sample story from the enemy that highlights his beautiful character:

After the battle of Gettysburg a wounded Union soldier looked up to see General Robert E. Lee riding by. The soldier raised his hand in defiance and shouted, "Hurrah for the Union!" Lee looked at him and dismounted. The soldier later recounted that he thought Lee was coming to kill him. Instead, the general came over to the soldier and said, "Son, I hope you will soon be well."

The soldier later wrote, “If I live a thousand years I shall never forget the expression on General Lee’s face. There he was, defeated, retiring from a field that had cost him and his cause almost their last hope, yet he stopped to say words like those to a wounded soldier of the opposition who had taunted him as he passed by.”⁶

It’s recounting stories of heroism like that that can help our children to not get bitter at tragic events and instead to aspire to the kind of greatness of a Robert E. Lee – the kind of greatness that can show kindness to those around us even when we are facing overwhelming trouble.

E. Teach relational lessons (family loyalty, friendship, sticking by a buddy, etc.) (v. 23)

Verse 23 also teaches relational lessons: “**And in their death they were not divided.**” Some fallen American heroes were not family men. Saul had his bad moments, but he did love his son. But I really think that this is not so much a tribute to Saul as it is to Jonathan. When we looked at the battle we saw that Jonathan and his brothers fought off the troops to let their dad climb to higher ground and perhaps escape. They were risking their lives to stick with their dad. And there are wonderful stories of soldiers who stuck with their buddies knowing full well that it would mean their death. The TV series, *Band of Brothers*, tells stories of men who in their death were not divided. And there is something that draws our hearts out to that kind of heroism.

F. Use war stories to teach about manliness (v. 23)

Verse 23 concludes with two things that made Saul and Jonathan the kind of macho men that stories are told about: “**They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.**” When Saul was first made king the narrator tells us that he was a huge guy, standing head and shoulders above all his men. But his unbelievable brawn did not keep him from being fleet of foot. Often big men are not fast, but both Saul and Jonathan were. So this is praising Saul and Jonathan for their athletic prowess. Why would we need to teach our children about the athletic prowess of America’s fallen soldiers? Because manliness is a good thing to aspire to. Is it the only thing that shows manliness? No. But neither should it be neglected out of political correctness. This is an inspired account that admires their manliness in a

⁶ Pastor Colquitt Nash summarized this nicely in the Lake Stevens Journal - http://www.lakestevensjournal.com/religion-spiritual/article.exm/2011-03-21_general_robert_e_lee_s_forgiveness

physical way. And there are hundreds of stories that can encourage our children to be fit, to not give up, and to endure hardship as a good soldier.

I think of the story of John Colter. He was a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804-1806, and his abilities at tracking, hunting, and foraging were incredibly valuable to the team. But his whole life showed that he was a man's man. Some of you may know of Colter's run. In 1808 he had been injured by the Blackfeet Indians while leading a group of Crow Indians to Fort Raymond. The next year he had another run in with the Blackfeet. He was canoeing up the Jefferson River with another mountain man, John Potts when they encountered several hundred Blackfeet warriors, who demanded that they come ashore. Colter came ashore, realizing that fighting would be futile. But Potts refused to. They shot Potts, who in turn shot a warrior. Well that really ticked them off, and hundreds of guns riddled him with bullets. They dragged him to shore and hacked him to pieces. They taunted Colter by throwing pieces of his dismembered friend on him, but then thought they would have a game. They stripped Colter naked, gave him a bit of a head start, and then the warriors chased him to kill him. Colter was an incredibly fast long distance runner, and after some miles he was still way ahead of most of the warriors, with only one Indian who had managed to bridge the distance and was only twenty yards behind. Colter's nose was still bleeding profusely, so he looked a mess. Let me pick up the story as told by John Bradbury:

Again he turned his head, and saw the savage not twenty yards from him. Determined if possible to avoid the expected blow, he suddenly stopped, turned round, and spread out his arms. The Indian, surprised by the suddenness of the action, and perhaps at the bloody appearance of Colter, also attempted to stop; but exhausted with running, he fell whilst endeavouring to throw his spear, which stuck in the ground, and broke in his hand. Colter instantly snatched up the pointed part, with which he pinned him to the earth, and then continued his flight.⁷

Colter had gotten a blanket from the Indian he had killed, and continued on and on with the Indians pursuing him. At the Madison River, five miles from his start, he dived underwater and climbed into a large beaver lodge. But he could see that the Blackfeet were not giving up and were continuing to look all over the place for him. So under cover of darkness that night, he slipped out of the beaver lodge and swam to shore. Since the place was swarming with Blackfeet, he decided to do the

⁷ Quoted in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Colter. There are a number of variations on the story of Colter's run, but all of them contain the main elements.

unexpected and to climb up the jagged mountain in the dark, walk through the snow in his bare feet, and climb down the other side. He kept walking with bare swollen feet for eleven days to a trader's fort on the Little Big Horn. It was an incredible feat of survival and endurance. Those are the kinds of stories that can teach our children to never give up.

And there are many stories of physical valor in America's history. Even small men have proved their valor and endurance in remarkable ways. There are remarkable stories of old men and boys who would not give up. Perhaps you have read of the escape of Chris Ryan. Chris Ryan made SAS history with "the longest escape and evasion by an SAS trooper or any other soldier." And he actually beat the previous escape and evasion record by 100 miles, besting SAS trooper, Jack Sillito's amazing feat in the Sahara Desert in 1942. So we can use war stories to teach our children manliness, perseverance, being faithful even when it is painful. So there are six ways that you can teach your children how to honor America's military heroes.

III. Teach your children to remember the blessings America's fallen soldiers have provided (v. 24)

The third major point is that we should teach our children to remember the blessings that America's fallen soldiers have provided for our country. Verse 24 only mentions the *financial* blessings that came as a result of Saul's leadership of the army. It says, "**O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury; who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.**" The New American Commentary says, "Saul should not be thought of as having personally distributed such manifestations of wealth ... but his military successes provided a stable society that permitted the Israelites to acquire wealth through agriculture, trade, and conquest." Having a strong defensive military (even if it isn't always used perfectly) does provide for a more stable society.

I've not been fond of some of our offensive wars around the globe, but on July 4 we remember the incredible sacrifices made by our founding fathers to preserve our liberties. I think that first war for American independence was a good war, was a lawful war, was a Biblical war, and it was a war that we ought to thank the Lord for. That war for independence was one of many things that set this country on a path toward peace and prosperity. The war of 1812 likewise is a war that we fought with heaven's help, and it deserves a retelling.

On the other hand, there have been wars that we have engaged in that did the exact opposite. R. L. Dabney gives a lengthy account of a delegation

from the South begging Lincoln to consider a compromise and to not go to war.⁸ Colonel Baldwin assured Lincoln that he would not have to compromise his views on Union, but they urged a slower process of reconciliation of the states, and sought to convince Lincoln that they had the votes to eventually make reunion possible. But Lincoln was adamant that the lost taxes in the meantime would be unacceptable. Finally Colonel Baldwin said,

Only give this assurance to the country, in a proclamation of five lines, and we pledge ourselves that Virginia (and with her the border States) will stand by you as though you were our own Washington. So sure am I of this, and of the inevitable ruin which will be precipitated by the opposite policy, that I would this day freely consent, if you would let me write those decisive lines, you might cut off my head, were my life my own, the hour after you signed them.”

He was offering his life in place of the country going to war, and guaranteeing that union could be achieved without war if he would only strike the unconstitutional issues at stake that were so harming the South. But Lincoln adamantly refused any compromise, saying, “What then, would become of my tariff?” Another witness of this Southern delegation meeting with Lincoln said that everything came down to money lost from the Charleston ports, and one delegate quoted Lincoln as saying, “If I do that, what will become of my revenue? I might as well shut up housekeeping at once!” So the War Between the States was in part an economic war on the South. And there have been other wars that have robbed Americans of wealth rather than helping America. But whether you agree with me or disagree, here is the point - there are blessings and curses that result from wars, and we should be prepared to teach our children of both the blessings and the curses; the stability and the instability that the machinery of war can bring.

IV. Teach your children how to express both love and loss for America’s fallen soldiers (vv. 26-27)

And then lastly, teach your children how to express both love and loss for America’s fallen soldiers. Verses 26-27 say,

**2Samuel 1:25 “How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle!
Jonathan was slain in your high places.**

**2Samuel 1:26 I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been
very pleasant to me; Your love to me was wonderful, Surpassing the love of
women.**

⁸ R. L. Dabney, *Discussions, volume IV* (Vallecito: Ross House Books, 1979), pp. 87-100.

2Samuel 1:27 “How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!”

A. Such wars give perspective on life and death (vv. 25,27)

Once again notice the repetition of the phrase, “**How the mighty have fallen.**” This keeps our love and loss in perspective. America’s heroes are heroes, but they are not gods; they are not perfect; and they all remind us of our human mortality and frailty. In fact, that’s one of the good reasons for studying war – to teach our children about mortality, and more importantly, to teach our children that there are causes that are worth dying for. The movie Braveheart does a wonderful job of illustrating that point. And I love the phrase of William Wallace: “Every man dies, not every man really lives.” Remembering America’s fallen helps to give perspective on life and death.

B. Teach a love for warriors but not a love for war (vv. 25-27)

But that phrase also reminds us that the love we express should not be a love for war, but a love for the heroes involved in such sacrifices. Now, I don't have a problem with loving the study of war. That’s a bit different than loving war itself. Certainly we men can find war very interesting, intriguing, and worth studying. But it isn’t war that we value, but the freedoms that emerge from a successful battle against tyranny. It isn’t war that we value, but the men and women who were involved in that war. There is a difference.

C. Allow your kids to experience the distress and sense of loss that such wars produce (v. 26)

And David loved Jonathan as his own soul. It says, “**I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan.**” It is natural to find our children to be distressed when heroes die and they don’t live happily ever after. Studying our wars brings realism to our children. But it also helps them to identify with amazing men like Stonewall Jackson and others, and to feel real distress, loss, and grief to read of their deaths. That’s a healthy thing. A trust in God’s sovereignty does not mean you don’t grieve over losses. No one would deny that General Robert E. Lee trusted God's sovereignty as much as David, but he felt the loss of Stonewall Jackson enormously. And the loss we feel empathetically today pales into insignificance with the loss that such men have felt. Verse 26 says, “**Your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women.**” Those who have fought for long periods in combat (as Jonathan and David had) sometimes develop a close relationship with each

other that you cannot compare to any other friendship. It's not devaluing marriage or devaluing other kinds of friendships. But there are friendships developed during the misery of war that are so strong that the loss is more painful than most people can understand. And there have been some movies that have given a tiny glimpse into the pain of the loss of such a buddy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, because this is a lament for the fall of Israel's heroes, I think it is appropriate for us to remember not only great warriors like Saul and Jonathan, but to remember those who have died in America's wars, however faulty some of those wars may have been. To do so is walking in the steps of men like David.

This Wednesday, I would encourage you to remember the losses in America's War for Independence. According to the World Book Encyclopedia, 25,700 Americans died, and 10,000 British. That is a war that defined the course of this nation for the past 236 years.

But Britain once again sought to control this continent, and in the War of 1812, we lost around 20,000.

Perhaps the most tragic loss of life came during the War Between the States, a war that claimed more American lives than any other war (in fact equal to or greater than all the other wars combined). Now, as to figures, for the past 110 years, the death toll had been calculated at 618,222 men. But recently J. David Hacker, a demographic historian from Binghamton University in New York has used newly digitized census data and has pretty conclusively shown that the figures are much higher.⁹ And several other historical organizations have confirmed the legitimacy of this study.¹⁰ So the

⁹ The full study can be read at <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5052156206> or http://www2.binghamton.edu/history/docs/Hacker_CW_dead.pdf A summary can be read at http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=49&ved=0CGYQFjAIOCG&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww2.binghamton.edu%2Fhistory%2Fdocs%2FHacker_JEH_HumanCost.pdf&ei=6sbxT7WqLKfA2gWnwsC1DA&usg=AFQjCNFGN7hO2QFfM0cHuOjv3jDJzeO8TA&sig2=YdGku-nDilDKEiwrCVU_Fw For an NPR story by Hacker, see <http://www.npr.org/2012/05/29/153937334/professor-civil-war-death-toll-may-be-really-off>

¹⁰ For news articles on this see, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/03/science/civil-war-toll-up-by-20-percent-in-new-estimate.html?pagewanted=all> See <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/09/20/recounting-the-dead/#more-105317> and numerous other articles on mainstream newspapers, journals, and discussion forums.

new figures are that over 750,000 died as a direct result of that war.¹¹ I feel distress every time I read of these valiant men, both North and South, who died for their country.

But if we only look at the big wars, we lose perspective on the stream of deaths America has suffered. In addition to the three that I have already listed, let me give thirty-two more American wars. I'm going to skip the dates, even though I have them written down here, and I'm just going to name the war and give the losses that we sustained. This way you can get a feel for the heavy price that has been paid.¹²

War for Independence	1775-1783	25,700 ¹³
Northwest Indian War	1785-1795	1,056
Quasi-War	1798-1800	514
War of 1812	1812-1815	20,000
1st Seminole War	1817-1818	36
Black Hawk War	1832	305
2nd Seminole War	1835-1842	1,535
Mexican-American War	1846-1848	13,283
3rd Seminole War	1855-1858	26
Civil War	1861-1865	750,000
Indian Wars	1865-1898	919
Great Sioux War	1875-1877	314
Spanish-America War	1898	2,446
Philippine-American War	1898-1913	4,196
Boxer Rebellion	1900-1901	131
Mexican Revolution	1914-1919	35
Haiti Occupation	1915-1934	148
World War 1	1917-1918	116,516
North Russia Campaign	1918-1920	424
American Exp. Force Siberia	1918-1920	328
Nicaragua Occupation	1927-1933	48
World War 2	1941-1945	405,399
Korean War	1950-1953	36,516
Vietnam War	1955-1975	58,209

¹¹ Because blacks were not included in the study, some have thought that the death toll may be as high as a million. See for example, <http://blog.oup.com/2012/04/black-white-demographic-death-toll-civil-war/> I have not been able to verify this, and am sticking with Hacker's lower figure.

¹² These figures have been taken from various sites including http://www.militaryfactory.com/american_war_deaths.asp http://www.historyguy.com/american_war_casualties.html <http://www.americanwarlibrary.com/allwars.htm> <http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/american%20war%20casualty.htm> etc.

¹³ Apparently this number is higher than the Military's figures because it includes the deaths of those in militias that were not in the Army, Navy, or Marines. For those lower figures, see <http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/american%20war%20casualty.htm>

El Salvador Civil War	1980-1992	37
Beirut	1982-1984	266
Grenada	1983	19
Panama	1989	40
Gulf War	1990-1991	258
Operation Provide Comfort	1991-1996	19
Somalia Intervention	1992-1995	43
Bosnia	1995-2004	12
NATO Air Campaign Yugoslavia	1999	20
Afghanistan	2001- (as of 2/2012)	1,893
Iraq	2003-2011	4,484
Total		~1.5 million

Were these wars worth it? Perhaps an even better question to ask would be this: “Are we worth the sacrifices that those war heroes made?” Are we living in a way that would honor their sacrifices and make their sacrifices worthwhile, or is our country defiling the names of the heroes of the past through our immorality, anti-Christian stances, and our unconstitutional policies, agencies, and programs? Does America today stand against the very principles that most of those 1.5 million bled and died for? To answer that question, let me read from a report of the Congress in 1854. Someone had sued the government demanding a separation of Christianity from state. And as part of the response to that suit, the Congress asked the House Judiciary Committee to produce a detailed study report. It took one year of research to produce the report, but here is a small paragraph from that report that gives the gist of the conclusion that the Congress ratified. It said,

Had the people, during the Revolution, had any suspicion of any attempt to war against Christianity, that Revolution would have been strangled in its cradle...At the time of the adoption of the constitution and the amendments, the universal sentiment was that Christianity should be encouraged, not any one sect [but Christianity] ...in this age there can be no substitute for Christianity...That was the religion of the founders of the republic and they expected it to remain the religion of their descendants...the great vital and conservative element in our system is the belief of our people in the pure doctrines and divine truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁴

The date for that Congressional report was March 27, 1854. According to that report, the wars we fought were to preserve Christian Civilization, not to reduce it. And it is my belief that many of the heroes of the past who bled and died for America’s liberty would grieve that America

¹⁴ House Judiciary Committee Report, March 27, 1854.

has thrown away her incredible Christian heritage, much like Esau traded in his inheritance for a meal. They would grieve that we are not standing in the tradition of their heroism. They would grieve that we have trampled their sacrifices in the ground by passively giving up a Christian civilization. Whatever you think of Franklin D. Roosevelt (and I personally see him as an enemy of the Constitution, not a friend), yet he was absolutely right when he said on June 6, 1944, “If we will not prepare to give all that we have and all that we are to preserve Christian civilization in our land, we shall go to destruction.”

It is my prayer that on this 200th anniversary of the valiant war of 1812, and on this 236th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, that Americans would be stirred up everywhere by the patriotism and heroism of the past to be valiant in fighting for and regaining the Christian liberties that we have lost. And that we would teach these principles to our children and to our children’s children. May it be so, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Remembering the Fallen

2 Samuel 1:17-27

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 7-1-2012

Introduction – It is important to teach others how to remember America's fallen soldiers (see vv. 17-18)

- A. It is appropriate to honor fallen soldiers who weren't perfect (v. 17a)
- B. We should not glory in the ugliness of war when we honor fallen soldiers – this is a lament (v. 17b)
- C. But neither should we shun war or fail to take pride in our fallen soldiers (v. 17c)
- D. We should pass stories of America's heroes on to succeeding generations (v. 17d)
- I. Teach your children how to respect America's fallen soldiers (see vv. 19-21)
 - A. While we should make heroes, we should not engage in hero worship (v. 19b)
 - B. But our hearts should be drawn out by the heroic characteristics of such men (v. 19a)
 - C. It should grieve us when the enemy can rejoice over us spiritually or militarily (v. 20)
 - D. Let landmarks and memorials be a part of paying your respects (v. 21)
- II. Teach your children how to honor the heroism of America's fallen soldiers (vv. 22-23)
 - A. You don't need to sanitize the gory ugliness of war (v. 22a-b)
 - B. It honors our heroes to make mention of the heroism of the enemy (v. 22b)
 - C. There is no need for exaggeration (v. 22c-d)
 - D. Paint a picture of character issues worth imitating (v. 22a)
 - E. Teach relational lessons (family loyalty, friendship, sticking by a buddy, etc) (v. 23)
 - F. Use war stories to teach about manliness (v. 23)
- III. Teach your children to remember the blessings America's fallen soldiers have provided (v. 24)
- IV. Teach your children how to express both love and loss for America's fallen soldiers (vv. 26-27)
 - A. Such wars give perspective on life and death (vv. 25,27)
 - B. Teach a love for warriors but not a love for war (vv. 25-27)
 - C. Allow your kids to experience the distress and sense of loss that such wars produce (v. 26)

Conclusion



Thos Nelson jr.

