



"No soldiers of Christ are ever lost, missing or left dead on the battlefield."
—J.C. Ryle

13-Nov-15

Remembering Our Veterans

This past Wednesday, Veterans Day, was the 96th anniversary of what was originally known as Armistice Day, proclaimed by President Woodrow Wilson to commemorate the cessation of hostilities between Germany and the Allied nations during World War I. The armistice took effect on "the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month," marking the end of what Congress called "the most destructive, sanguinary, and far reaching war in human annals." The day not only honors the soldiers who had given their lives, but also expresses gratitude for victory in what became known as "the war to end all wars."

Following an even larger commitment in World War II and then the Korean War, President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Congress declared that November 11 would be a day to honor all veterans. Reflecting on lessons that we can learn from veterans, one man summed them up, saying that they help us in "understanding that not everything is about you, and self-sacrifice . . . is the most righteous thing someone can do for this nation."

Although Christians are not called to fight in this world's wars, we *are* called to a spiritual battle, to which the Bible alludes in many places. [Hebrews 11:32-33](#) speaks of some heroes of the faith—we could call them our veterans: ". . . Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through [faith](#) subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions." The author continues in verses 36-37, writing that others "had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were

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sawn in two, were tempted, and were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, [afflicted](#), tormented." He summarizes in verse 39: "And all these, having a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise"—not yet. They await the first resurrection.

The Bible is full of stories of brave men and women who performed heroic actions that saved the nation from destruction and captivity. [Romans 15:4](#) and [I Corinthians 10:11](#) tell us that their stories were included in Scripture for us to learn from. But we should remember that not every one of God's people did such "heroic" things. Not all were kings or apostles or prophets or patriarchs. I Corinthians 12 emphasizes that each member of the Body of Christ is extremely valuable and necessary no matter how humble. We can see a parallel in the armed services: Not every service person is an officer, a pilot, medic, or infantryman. Some are clerks, some are cooks, and some are carpenters. They may not fight on the front lines, yet they are all needed to win the war.

Perhaps we need to remember stories of biblical veterans who came from humble circumstances. [Luke 2:36-38](#) briefly tells the story of Anna, a widow of about 84 years of age, who served [God](#) night and day with fasting and prayers. Because of her dedication and faithfulness, she was even allowed to witness the first coming of our Savior.

In [Acts 9:36](#), 39 Luke records the service that Tabitha performed for her brethren, making tunics and garments, and maybe on account of this service, God led Peter to resurrect her after she had died, later using the miracle as a witness to convict many. Now the stories of the faithful service of these veterans are shared with billions of people.

One of the judges, Jephthah, is called "a man of valor," but beginning his life as the illegitimate son of Gilead and a harlot can hardly be called a great start. His half-brothers resented him and drove him from their home. In his early years, he banded together with some scoundrels who may have supported themselves by robbery. In spite of this terrible beginning, he overcame the stigma and became a national savior for the people of Israel. He is mentioned in Hebrews 11 as awaiting a better resurrection.

Mary Magdalene overcame great obstacles and ended up being a noteworthy Christian. Imagine being possessed by seven demons ([Luke 8:2](#); [Mark 16:9](#))! Later, Mary was privileged to be the first person to arrive at the grave of [Jesus](#) after He had been raised, even before such luminaries as Peter and John ([John 20:1](#); [Matthew 28:1-8](#)). While this does not mean that she was more righteous than those others, it speaks volumes about her belief and zeal.

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Another veteran is Stephen, who had been chosen as a deacon to distribute food to the Greek-speaking widows ([Acts 6:1-6](#)). He was an eloquent man, "full of faith and power, [and] did great wonders and signs among the people" ([Acts 6:8](#)), and many of the Jews were jealous of him. As they did with Christ, they used false witnesses to claim that he was teaching against the [law of God](#) (verse 11-14). They brought him before the Sanhedrin, and the high priest asked him to defend his actions. Under the inspiration of the [Holy Spirit](#), his lengthy discourse on how God has been working since Abraham—and how Israel had rejected Him—so angered the Jewish leadership that they stoned him (Acts 7).

[1 Peter 2:9](#) describes the church of God as a holy nation. It is a spiritual nation that we can truly be honored to serve. How can we begin serving? Notice [Hebrews 12:1](#) from the *God's Word Translation* of the Bible: "Since we are surrounded by so many examples of faith, we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially [sin](#) that distracts us. We must run the race that lies ahead of us and never give up."

Considering these biblical veterans, heroes of faith, we have to remember that, although they may not have been prominently involved in the spiritual battle at first, when they were called upon, they were prepared, physically, mentally, and spiritually. We need to be prepared as they were, most of all spiritually. We need to put on the "whole armor of God" ([Ephesians 6:10-18](#))—the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, etc.—as we engage in the spiritual battles in our paths.

Motivational speaker Zig Ziglar has said, "Keep your head up. God gives His hardest battles to His strongest soldiers." We Christians truly are involved in "the most destructive, sanguinary, and far reaching war in human annals." Ours is the "war to end all wars," and it is the fight of our lives. Considering the great cloud of witnesses that have gone before us and their battles, we need to consider their successes and learn from their examples of self-sacrifice so we go prepared into our spiritual battles.

Happy Christian Veterans Day, brethren, and thank you for your service.

- John Reiss

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[**Are You Fighting the Good Fight?**](#)

by Martin G. Collins

Martin Collins exposes the pernicious doctrine extant in mainstream Christianity, as well as our previous fellowship: "Let go, and let God do it all for us," which releases us from any obligation to overcome and build character. In this deceptive doctrine, the Christian is warned not even to attempt struggle lest God's glory be taken away. If this false doctrine were true, there would be no need to put on the whole armor of God. Both Peter and James warn us to resist the Devil actively. Paul admonishes us to mortify the flesh and to "work out our salvation," not to wait passively for God to do it all for us. The Bible's frequent military metaphors and similes would be totally pointless if this "Let go, let God" doctrine were true. God does not promise to overcome for us, but to help us through His Holy Spirit, imparting Christ's mind in us. The function of each component of God's spiritual armor is thoroughly expounded in this message.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Christian Fight \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Despite the many blessings God bestows upon His saints, real Christianity more resembles a running battle against persistent, hostile forces than a leisurely stroll down the path of life. John Ritenbaugh uses the example of ancient Israel in the wilderness to illustrate that God prepares us for spiritual war against the enemies that would keep us from His Kingdom.

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