



CrossRoads Notes:

Turn your Bibles to 1 Samuel 12:23

Title: Becoming a Soldier's Shield /

*Theme: Praying for Those in Harm's Way /
Memorial Day*

Introduction: *Our key text today is set in the time when the prophet Samuel is giving his farewell speech.* In this speech Samuel confronts the people with evidence of the righteous acts performed by the Lord for the people of God. (1 Samuel 12:7) Samuel tells the people, "If you fear the Lord and serve and obey Him and do not rebel against His commands and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God – Good! But if you do not obey the Lord, and if you rebel against His commands, His hand will be against you..." (1 Samuel 12:14-15)

It was harvest time and Samuel called upon the Lord to send thunder and rain so they would know what a great evil they had done in the eyes of the Lord when they asked for a king to rule over them as the other nations had kings. (1 Samuel 12:17) The same day Samuel prayed the "...Lord sent thunder and rain and all the people stood in awe of the Lord..." (1 Samuel 12:18) Listen to the response of the people to Samuel, "...Pray to the Lord your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to our sins the evil of asking for a king." (1 Samuel 12:19)

After a few more instructions, Samuel tells the people, "For the sake of His great name the Lord will not reject His people, because the Lord was pleased to make you His own." (1 Samuel 12:22) These words of promise lead us to our key text:

Listen as I read 1 Samuel 12:23, "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord for failing to pray for you." **Let us pray!**

Proposition: *I would propose to you that when those whose lives are in danger ask for prayer, it would be a sin to fail to pray for them.* Born again Christians can take their rightful place among such giants of intercession (The Expositors Bible Commentary) such as Moses, (Exodus 32:30-32) Daniel, (Daniel 9:4-20) The Apostle Paul (Romans 1:9-10) And Jesus. (Romans 8:34)

Interrogative Sentence: *Are Christians called to pray for each other and for those who risk their lives for their country?* Just what are the benefits in praying for those in our armed forces?

Transitional Sentence: *God who called us to Christ sent His Holy Spirit to have the Apostle Paul write, "I urge, then first of all, that request, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone..." (1 Timothy 2:1) Ephesians 6:18 tells us that Christians are to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers..."*

Samuel could have said, "Now that you Israelites have the king you wanted and sinned against God, go to Saul and have him pray for you." God knew that Saul's heart would not remain faithful to Him and His prayers would be superficial and self-centered. Therefore, The Lord would call forth a true man of God who knew Him and would pray so as not to be found in sin.

The Christian's call is to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and they sin when they restrain prayer in general, and in particular when they cease to pray for those who ask for it.

Even though Samuel would no longer have political leadership, he still had spiritual influence in teaching God's Word and through prayer. Christians do not need to have authority over those who serve in the armed forces and who are in harms way, but they most certainly can have an spiritual influence through heartfelt prayer.

As the prophets of God interceded in prayer for those they had spiritual responsibility over, Christians are to set the example before governmental leaders and armed force personal in regards to prayer which is God's way of overcoming anxiety in times of war. Samuel followed the example of Moses who interceded for the Jewish nation, and Christians are to follow the example of Samuel, the Apostle Paul and Jesus. Christians cannot forget the nation the Lord has led them into or called them to serve Him in. Nor should they fail to intercede for the men and women whom God raises up to protect the freedoms He has given them.

As Christians prayerfully examine the whole of Scripture they are led of the Holy Spirit to intercession. There is a knowing in their hearts that failing to pray for those who are in harms way, whether in fighting the spiritual or earthly battles of the Lord, is to be found in sin. Pleasing God involves interceding for all of His works and for the people He is using to get His will done. (The truths found in this portion of the message came from prayerful study of the NIV Bible; Matthew Henry Commentary; The Bible Readers Companion; Commentary on the Old Testament; The New American Commentary; True the Bible Commentary; The Pulpit Commentary)

Transitional Sentence: *Christians are to be faithful in praying for those who are in harms way.* God has set certain principles that must be followed in order for a nation to enjoy God's mighty intervention. Samuel was married and had a family. (1 Samuel 12:2) He had served as priest (1 Samuel 7) and Judge (1 Samuel 7:16; Acts 13:20) and he was a prophet. (Acts 3:24) He also got involved in directly praying for military situations, in calling a nation to repentance and giving them directions on how to live.

In order for the soldiers of a nation to enjoy the full power of God's protection or intervention there must be a person who has the Christ apportion gift of prophet (Ephesians 4:11-13) speaking forth the Word of God in that nation. Not only must there be a prophet speaking the Word of the Lord among them, people in that nation must heed to the prophets exhortations. They must be hungry to hear and have a heart to

obey. If the church of Jesus Christ is going to be the source of praying God's shield around its armed forces, it must have knowledge of God's Word and the courage to live out the Lord's exhortation or instructions. 1 Samuel 7:3 says, "Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

According to the truth found in 1 Samuel 7, Samuel sees something in the people of God that indicates that they are repentant and they are disgusted with their foreign servitude and wanting a restoration of liberty and independence. They are evidently coming to Samuel asking what can be done so they can be rescued from their bondage. The truths that Samuel brought forth to the Israelites must be grasped by the church who desires to pray prayers that enable their armed forces to enjoy God's shield of protection. Samuel tells them to produce the fruit of repentance by ridding themselves of foreign gods, the Baals and Ashtoreths."

"Baal's" (*baal*) means that the Israelites were guilty of worshiping many pagan gods along with serving the Lord. They included the worship of the gods of the country they lived in with the worship of the one true God. This is happening in America today, many claim to believe in God, yet by the expressions of their lives they are serving the worldly gods made up by mankind today.

"Ashtoreths," (*astarot*) refers to a false goddess, who was considered to be the goddess of love and fertility. It is also used as a plural word, denoting all the female divinities, whose rites were celebrated by the most gross and revolting impurities. Quite often she is worshipped in connection with Baal and she is depicted as being nude with horns on her head.

Jesus warned that to make possessions central in life is also idolatry. (Matthew 6:24) Paul in Romans 1:18-25 teaches that idolatry is not the first stage of religion, but it is the result of deliberate religious apostasy. When man sins against the light of God's Word and refuses to worship the Lord in Spirit and truth, God brings major chastisements. Idolatry is that which leads to the dethronement of God from the heart. The Apostle Paul warns us in Ephesians 5:5, "For this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person-such a man is an idolater-has any inheritance in the kingdom of God." In giving rules for holy living the Apostle Paul writes, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immortality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." (Colossians 3:5)

This nation uses sensuality to sell her man made gods. Nearly everything use women dressing and using sensual looks to draw people to their product in order to draw a person's mind off purity so to satisfy the flesh. Pornography is ramped in this nation even among church attendees. Many who claim to believe in God have their Baals and Ashtoreths today as much as the Israelites did in Samuel's time.

The Bible says that God is the same today as He was yesterday. I believe that if America would truly repent of her sins, and begin to fully seek after the Lord, they can see Him do some great things in battle for her troops. Only God knows what He is going to do for America in regard to protecting her borders from those who would put her people in harm's way. The church needs only to fulfill her calling to pray and teach Christians to obey what the Lord Jesus commands. (Matthew 28:20)

Transitional Sentence: *History records powerful truths of God's intervention for armed forces as people take time to prayer for those in harm's way.*

In May of 1940, Germany was on the move and it was unbelievable how much control Hitler got over Europe. Hitler had backed up nearly all the remaining Allied troops to the beach at Dunkirk, France. Our Allied troops were surrounded. Ten miles to their rear was the German army. In front of them the English channel.

An evacuation by water was their only hope, however, it would not be easy. The English Channel was known for her terrible tides and treacherous winds. She was full of German mines and down the beach was Nazi artillery. The only other direction to go held German U-boats.

400,000 Allied troops were at Dunkirk and one English General said, "Nothing but a miracle could save them."

It was at this time the Holy Spirit of God moved upon Reece Howell and a group of 100 students in a Welsh Bible College to become intercessors for those who were in harm's way of Hitler's armed forces. For some time they prayed from 7:00 P.M. to 12:00 Midnight. While those Welsh Bible students prayed, the British Royal Navy rounded up practically everything that floated in England to go a rescue the troops.

During the rescue attempt there were several miracles. First, Hitler, for some mysterious reason stopped the Panzer tanks just 10 miles away. If he had kept moving he could have done great damage to our Allied Forces or destroyed them completely. Second, for an unheard of 9 days, the English Channel was perfectly calm, smooth as glass. Old-timers said, "We have never seen it like this before."

Heavy fog sometimes moved in and at other times smoke from burning oil fields drifted calmly towards the beach, thus, keeping the German air-force from seeing anything from the air during the evacuation. When the evacuation off the beach was finished, 338,000 Allied troops were rescued. The other 62,000 soldiers gave their lives so their fellow soldiers could get off the beach. They fought the oncoming Nazi Armed Forces when they finally made their move to attack again.

It is because of that kind of sacrifice that we take time to observe Veterans Day. It is because of God responding to the prayers of great intercessors that we enjoy the freedom that we have in America today.

In Closing: *Great Christian leaders have known the necessity of coming to repentance and spending some time in intercession for those in harm's way.*

President Abraham Lincoln, in a National Proclamation of Prayer and Repentance in 1863 wrote, "We have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were

produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness." (The Presidential Prayer Team Website)

He also wrote, "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and all that is about me, seemed insufficient... One stormy night I tossed on my bed, unable to sleep as I thought of the terrible sufferings of our soldiers... I spent an hour in agonizing prayer." (The Presidential Prayer Team Website)

The most moving story about the observance of remembering those who gave their lives in war is about a woman in the south who was putting some flowers on the grave of a soldier from the North. This young soldier lost his life in the Civil War. When the other southern ladies saw her putting flowers on a Union Soldier's grave they got after her. She politely told them, "Some mother from the north grieves this very day for the lost of her son, just as we grieve the lost of our sons."

Everyone should let "Memorial Day" be a time of uniting and remembering those who gave their lives, comfort those who grieve the lost of a family member and especially let it be a time to remember those who are in harm's way right now, for only God can protect those who are not in this land of freedom nor even a safe land to live in. Christians must take time to become a soldier's shield through intercessory prayer. Let us Pray!