



Title: Becoming a Soldier's Shield (Veteran's Sunday)
Theme: Praying for Those in Harm's Way

"As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord for failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right." (1 Samuel 12:23)

Christians can take their rightful place among such giants of intercession

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. And I will teach you the way that is good and right."

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) as Moses, (Exodus 32:30-32) Daniel, (Daniel 9:4-20) the apostle Paul (Romans 1:9-10) And Jesus. (Romans 8:34)

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?

“I urge, then first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone...”

God who called us to Christ sent His Holy Spirit to have the Apostle Paul write, “I urge, then first of all, that requests, 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 have 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, Samuel, who knew Him and would pray so as not to be found in sin in his own life.

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 harm’s way, but they most certainly can have a 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 personnel in regard 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 do not need to be in perfect health to be prayer intercessors for our armed forces. Dr. Jay Vernon McGee knew of many sick, bedridden Christians on whose heart the Lord had laid the responsibility to pray for those in harm’s way. He found them to be very much used of God just as Samuel was. All Christians who come to understand and respond to their call to pray for others have the great opportunity to go before the “Throne of Grace” (Hebrews 4:16) and intercede for their fellowman. They have on many occasions seen the truth of what James wrote, “...The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16)

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.

Christians must resist that temptation of omission in prayer because they become weary of the nation's continued descent into sin. The prophet Samuel saw the sins of the people, yet committed to pray for them because he did not want to sin against the Lord. The most influential work done for the Hebrews was the teaching of God's Word and the prayers that came from great intercessors such as Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and King David. These powerful intercessors did not just leave the people of God to their own course – to sow as they pleased and reap as they had sown. They did not withdraw from their responsibility, but interceded with all their hearts before a merciful God who could bring a people to repentance, protect them from their enemies and empower them to accomplish His perfect will.

Prayer is mightier than a king's power of authority and more effective than a warrior's sword. Wars are going to come and it is the responsibility of Christians to hold up their generation of soldiers in prayer which the Apostle Paul understood to be a weapon that has divine power to demolish strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:4)

The Holy Spirit moved the church to pray for Peter when he was in harm's way before King Herod. (Acts 12:5) The Bible records the Apostle Paul's intercession in prayer for Timothy night and day, for Timothy was to face godlessness (2 Timothy 3) and false teachers (2 Timothy 1:3; 1 Timothy 4 and 6) The Christians in Colosse were in great danger of heretical teaching and the Bible says Paul never stopped praying for them. (Colossians 1:9)

The goal for every Christian should be to say as the Apostle Paul who wrote, "God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of His Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times..." (Romans 1:9-10)

As Christians prayerfully examine the whole of Scripture they are led of the Holy Spirit to intercession. They know in their hearts that failing to pray for those who are in harm's way, whether in fighting the spiritual or earthly battles of the Lord, is to 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)

Christians are to pray for those in harm's way because those who are sacrificing their lives for this nation's freedom have asked for it. The Lord has raised up a ministry called the Presidential Prayer Team and many have joined forces with them to pray each week for the important decisions to be made by the president and for our troops. Our president has requested prayer on many occasions from the people of the United States of America for the guidance and protection of our troops.

The Holy Spirit is moving throughout America in these last days to raise up intercessors for those who are in harm's way. One such man is Christopher Lucey. As he surrendered to the Holy Spirit's leading to focus his studies on prayer, he came under the conviction that the Lord wants to see a revival of prayer across this nation. His ministry now is to train Christians to pray for America, the president and for those who serve in our armed forces.

This testimony was written about Christopher from a person who has the opportunity to observe his life. "Christopher brings a refreshing and Spirit-filled approach to all he does and seeks to align those he trains in prayer to find God's agenda and get a passion for prayer only as it is rooted in and [directed by] the Word of God." (Presidential Prayer Team Website)

God has set certain principles that must be followed in order for a nation to enjoy God's mighty intervention

Christians are to be faithful in praying for those who are in harm's 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 in 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 Christ's apportioned gift of prophecy (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 prophet's 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."

1 Samuel chapter 7 records the work of God in His people to purify them from the sin of idolatry. Idolatry is a departure from true religion: the worship of false gods, whether by means of images or otherwise; and the worship of the Lord by means of images.

An idol is whatever claims the loyalty which belongs to God alone. The Lord speaks to us through Isaiah 42:8, "I am the Lord; that is My Name! I will not give My glory to another or my praise to idols."

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 want a restoration of liberty and independence. They are evidently coming to Samuel to ask 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."

"Baals" (*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 use 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 manmade gods. Nearly everything uses women dressing and using sensual looks to draw people to their product in order to draw a person's mind off purity to satisfy the flesh. Pornography is rampant 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 first step to becoming a church that prays prayers that cause our nation and her armed forces to enjoy God as their shield must be petitioning the Lord to bring America to repentance for her many sins. Christians are God's chosen people, a modern day kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:5,9) and they have the privilege of preparing a nation to enjoy God's intervention. This is done by first asking God to make Americans sick of their sins and make them hungry for the Lord. Christians can pray that the Lord would make our Armed Forces aware of their need to have God's protection, blessings and intervention as they fight this war on terrorism.

The people of Israel listened to the exhortation of the prophet Samuel and they "...fasted and confessed [saying], 'We have sinned against the Lord.'" (1 Samuel 7:6) The Bible says, "Israel mourned and sought after the Lord." (1 Samuel 7:2) The Bible records the mighty hand of God that came about from the repentance of the Hebrews and because a righteous man of God, Samuel intervened in prayer.

In 1 Samuel 7 we read of Samuel a great man of prayer fulfilling his position as judge, prophet and priest. He tells the Israelites to meet in Mizpah. He gives them the great news that he is going to intercede for them. (1 Samuel 7:5) The Bible says Samuel cried out to God on Israel's behalf. (1 Samuel 7:9)

When the Philistines heard that the Hebrews gathered at Mizpah, the Philistine leaders decided to attack the Israelites. The Israelites became frightened and they went to the man of God and requested prayer saying, "Samuel, Do not stop crying out to God for us, [pray] that [God] may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines." (1 Samuel 7:8)

Listen to what the Bible says about God's deliverance, in answer to Israel's seeking after the Lord and Samuel's prayer. "[When] the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. ...that day the Lord thundered with a loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them..." (1 Samuel 7:10-11)

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 would see Him do some great things in battle for her troops.

1 Samuel chapter 7 says, "Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines." (1 Samuel 7:13) The Israelites had their land restored back to them, and they delivered their neighboring territory from the power of the Philistines and there was peace between the Israelites and the Amorites. (1 Samuel 7:14) In the lifetime of Samuel, the great prophet, priest, judge and prayer intercessor, the Philistines never invaded Israel territory again. (1 Samuel 7:13) (The truths found in this division come from studying of the NIV Bible; The New International Dictionary of the Bible; The New Bible Commentary; A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory on the Old

Testament; The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia; The Complete Word Study Dictionary; The Pulpit Commentary)

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)

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

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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 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.

Great Christian leaders know the necessity of coming to repentance, knowing the ways of the Lord and living according to God's Word

Great Christian leaders know the necessity of coming to repentance, knowing the ways of the Lord and living according to God's Word. They spend 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)

This is the first Sunday past Veterans' Day, which was set aside for us to remember the cost of those who gave their lives and time for the freedoms we enjoy in America. This is right because many of our Veterans bear the scars of war, some physically and mentally. It is our hope that no one would take for granted the cost paid by those who sacrificed so much so we can live as we do.

As we take time to honor our Veterans may we not forget the cost paid by the perfect Veteran, Jesus Christ. He bore public shame and His sacrifice got victory over the physical, mental and spiritual wounds of the war for the souls of men. The weapons of the flesh, the world and the lies of the devil were afflicted upon the sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ.

There are many Veterans today who are in harm's way and many have not surrendered their hearts over to the Perfect Veteran, Jesus Christ. There are also Veterans who know Christ. They need our intercession for protection as well.

Let us Pray!