

I. Introduction and Historical Context

This may not mean anything to you right now, and in fact it may seem goofy to some of you. But I need this this morning to help exercise a point that I want to get across this morning. If you have your Bibles, I want you to take them and turn to 2 Samuel 23.

What I want you to do today is this: I don't really want you to take notes, though I won't come out and slap your wrist if you do. You can get the tape afterwards and go through it again. This is one of these messages where you don't want to study it until you let it sink into your heart. I'll tell you what I want you to do while I'm preaching: I want you to focus on this picture. You don't know what this picture is all about, but you will before the message is over. It's really the whole crux of my message this morning, and it really is a central theme that I'm going to try to get across to you this morning.

This is Memorial Day weekend, and I want to take this message and I want to not only give tribute to the men and women across this nation today that are fighting and dying for your freedom and my freedom, not only in Iraq but all around the world, and look back at yesterday. We went down to the World War I Museum, and it was something that we wanted to do. My plan behind it, my mindset behind it was, I've taught you so much about the Bible and how the Bible is in relationship to history. I've showed you how all history, no matter where you start or where you go or what you've been taught, is basically in its most simplistic form: God moving down through history to accomplish His plan, and then the devil moving in opposition to stop that plan.

The whole concept yesterday, when we sat down there, and my goal was to take you and allow you to see that, and then I was going to make some comments on it this morning and wanted to see if you came up with your own conclusions. In the first 12 minutes, when we sat down there and watched that video, that guy, who's probably a lost man, who probably has no concept of the Bible, if you just have a little bit of inkling of a mindset of what I've given you out of the Word of God so far, in the first 12 minutes, that thing was pulled in the perfect perspective for you about World War I. We think World War I is a war because of the political scheme that was going off in Europe. I've got to say, that video, that first 12-minute video, was probably the best I've ever seen it explained. It really was. It was one of the most impacting things for me, and I've studied it all my life, to see that and to see how it really unfolded.

If you were paying attention yesterday, you saw, it was my goal, you saw how that, basically now, putting the political things aside, you got a great introduction yesterday of what I have been teaching you and trying to get across to you about the Bible, God, history, and men. You came out of there after 12 minutes before you ever saw the artifacts and saw all the things, and it was incredible. But the greatest thing that took place, I could have left after the first 12 minutes and saw that video, and been well satisfied, even though I wanted to see the rest of it.

What you got out of there, if you paid attention, when you saw the monarchies of Europe and tying them all back to England, what you saw there was what God was doing down through

history. How did He use World War I to get the land ready for the Jew, and then use World War II to get the Jew ready to go back to the land? The war was over in 1945; the Jews became a nation in 1948. In 1948, probably, really, if you know anything about the Bible at all, I would dare to say that in 1917, with the Balfour Declaration, which is what came out of World War I, you found yesterday and saw yesterday how Queen Victoria, the Queen of England, had forged the concept that all the European monarchies wanted to empower it.

In 1917, 11 months until the end of the war, General Allenby marched into Jerusalem, kicked out the Muslims, and took Jerusalem. Now the greatest nation on the face of this planet, that was the nation in the Philadelphia Church Age that carried the gospel around the world, now has control of the promised land that belonged to God's people. It's all being set up. It's all being orchestrated for you through history. You cannot understand history without understanding your Bible, because the God of the Bible is the God of history.

II. The Bible is a Book of Warfare

Now, I want to take that concept today, and I want to develop it more in a spiritual aspect. I want to take this thing, and I want to talk about some things that will help you and me as a church. We've got some things that we want to accomplish here in this church, and it's messages like this that really help quantify how we're going to get this thing done. Everywhere I go today, in almost everything I hear, somehow along the way, the Bible has got a bad rap of being a book about peace.

Everything you hear today, I can hardly drive down the street without seeing somebody's bumper sticker that says, "Pray for the peace in Jerusalem." I see bumper stickers that say, "Pray for peace." I see bumper stickers that say, "Peace." I grew up in a generation, and most of you young kids don't know anything about what a hippie is. You know what a hippie is, honey? You know what hippies are? You do. You're ahead of the game now. Most teenagers don't know what hippies are. We've been around hippies. We know what hippies are. Some of you maybe were hippies. When I first met my wife, I met her at Woodstock. Oh, no, not the concert; that was a gun shop.

I don't know how we've got the idea that the Bible is a book on peace. I know that a lot of bad teaching and a lot of bad preaching is out there today, and I know that people like to use the Bible for a political agenda. I know that a lot of liberal preachers and a lot of liberal teachers want to take the concepts and try to get away from the aspect of the Bible, so they want to make it up. Let's face it, Christianity has become effeminate today. It's effeminate. You're going to find that there are very few real men left in Christianity.

Leah, you gave me a book a while back that says, "Why Men Don't Go to Church." Remember that book you gave me? That was a great little book. I don't have to give that back, do I? Okay, good. You know why he said it was a great book. It was a book written by a guy who tried to answer the question, "Why Men Don't Want to Go to Church Today." He gave a number of reasons. But the greatest reason in there was the fact that Christianity has lost the steel in its

backbone. Real men don't want to go to church because most preachers don't look like real men. You shake hands with them when you leave like picking up a dead fish someplace.

Christianity has lost the concept that real men want to be Christians. So most real men who are unsaved go and they think to themselves, "If this is Christianity, if I've got to act like this, look like this, if I've got to lose my manhood, so to speak, to become a Christian, I don't want to be part of it." That's a sad state of affairs for Christianity to be in. I'm sorry, and I didn't have anything to do with it, but I'm telling you, Christianity has gone effeminate. Because of that, we find ourselves in a place where we absolutely, totally don't know what we're doing when it comes to not only going to church, but being a Christian.

There was a movement a number of years ago to take all the songs out of this hymnal right here that had to do with war. You know why? Because war offends people. Because we have a Christianity that's effeminate that wants to be all about peace. So they had a deal going where they wanted to get rid of all the songs in this book, "The Great Hymns of the Faith." You've got to go through here sometime and see how many songs deal with battle, war, and all the things that take place.

In history, there are two aspects of the church. There's the church triumphant. The church triumphant is the victory we get in Christ Jesus, that we may lose a few battles during life, but bless God, the war is already won. The church triumphant is spiritual. There is another aspect of the church; it's called the church militant. The church militant has to do with the fact that when you get saved, you become a soldier. That book is filled with the song, "Onward, Christian Soldiers, Marching as to War." People don't like that today. And yet you'll find war referenced 122 times in your Bible.

You'll find that war starts and breaks out in Genesis 1:1 and runs all the way through your Bible to the great battle of Revelation 20. All between that are wars. The Bible is not about... Now, when I say the Bible is not about peace, the Bible will bring peace to your soul. If you're saved here this morning, or not saved here this morning, if you would ever get saved, you would find a lasting peace in your soul that will last for all of eternity. Getting saved will end the conflict in your life. But we've come to the point now that we've lost that perspective. What we do is we think the Bible in general, if everybody just loves everybody and tries to get along with everybody, that the world's going to just break out like some daisy someday and it's going to be world peace.

Let me tell you something. Before peace ever comes in Jerusalem, you've got three wars that are going to be the mother of all wars. Saddam Hussein thought that the battle that he was going to fight was going to be the mother of all battles. Man, he didn't even know what he was talking about. There are three battles coming before you're ever going to see peace on this earth. There'll be no peace on this earth until the Prince of Peace comes back. The only way He's coming back is to kick the snot out of everybody down here that doesn't like Him.

You've studied the nation of Israel. They fight from their inception right up to the time that they go into captivity, from Genesis to Malachi. There's even a book in your Bible called Numbers. They're called Numbers because in Numbers they number themselves for war. I don't know how

we got to the point that we think that the Bible's about peace other than the salvation that comes to your soul.

Now these battles back there were literal. This is Memorial Day. You want something for your hot list? Our hot list around here is things I give them, but they've got to go find that on their own Bible. This is Memorial Day. All through eternity, God has a Memorial Day. Every year there's a day that God sets aside as a Memorial Day. Find out where that is. Bring it Thursday night.

So I'm telling you, the Bible's not about peace other than the peace that comes into your heart. The Bible's about warfare. Now the battles in the Old Testament were literal. We know that. But the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10 that the things that happened in the Old Testament, to the nation of Israel, were for our ensamples. I'll tell you why that is. Their battles were literal. They used literal swords, literal spears, literal slingshots, literal everything. They fought literal armies. Your battle and my battle is a spiritual battle. We wrestle not against flesh and blood. We wrestle against principalities and powers. We don't fight as Christians armed combat. We fight spiritual combat. But the combat is just as intense, and the literal battles of the Old Testament nation of Israel that they fought literally are pictures, in every case, in every scenario, of the spiritual battles that you and I are supposed to fight.

Paul understood this great teaching in 2 Timothy 2:3-4, when he says:

2 Timothy 2:3

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:4

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

He says, "Now what do you do with that verse in light of modern-day Christianity and modern-day pastors that so far never resemble what a soldier ought to be?" I know we call this church Old Path Baptist Church. I did that for a reason when we started because I wanted anybody. It's a great lead-in. Because when I tell somebody what the name of the church is, they have one of two responses. They either say, "Jeremiah 6," or they say, "Where'd you come up with that?" Right off the bat, I know where I'm at. I either have somebody who knows something about the Bible or somebody who doesn't know. Jeremiah 6 says that you're supposed to seek the Old Paths. But I could have just as easily called it the First Baptist Church of Fort Benning, Georgia, or the First Baptist Church of Fort Bragg, because we're supposed to be an army.

Somebody said one time, the reason why you can't get a good choir anymore to sing "Onward, Christian Soldiers," is because there are too many conscientious objectors in the choir. A lot of truth to that. My Bible says in Ephesians 6 that I'm going to put on the whole armor of God. Hebrews 2:10 says that Jesus Christ is the captain of my salvation. Exodus 15 says that the Lord God is a man of war. And Ecclesiastes 8:8 says there's no discharge from that war.

III. The Pastor's Vision and Expectations

This message is going to be about four men in particular that are found in 2 Samuel 23. I want to talk to you this morning in light of one of the greatest subjects in the Bible, and certainly a very fitting subject for today, Memorial Day, for practical aspect, understanding now that the Bible is about war and we are in this war. There will be no peace till Jesus Christ comes back other than the peace that's in your heart this morning because He's your Savior. I want to talk to you about four men in particular who make up a bunch of four men in a list that is called David's mighty men of valor.

Some of you guys want to be preachers someday. Some of you may make it. Probably most of you won't. Some of you want to be leaders within a church or you want to be somebody that can handle a piece of this war that we're in. You want to be able to grow up spiritually where you can take part of the ministry and then I don't have to deal with it and you can be responsible for this and responsible for that. Many of you are in training for that. Many of you are coming to that point in your life. Many of you are single. Some of you are husband and wife teams. Some of you are single men. Some of you are single ladies, and some of you just want God to use you in your life.

What I'm going to give you today is very important. That's why I said don't worry about the notes, because what I'm going to give you today and these three men are basically what separates the men from the boys. This is what separates the ones who get it done from the ones who never get it done. It's worth you listening to it this morning if you have those kinds of desires.

I always have to preface my sermon by this: I think the Bible is the model for everything, and I think that when Jesus took His disciples and He worked with them for three years, I think at the end of that three years when He went back to heaven, He gave us a great model. I think it takes about that long to get a young man or a young lady, a husband and a wife, whatever, to a point where they can really take part of this war spiritually and take over ministry. I think it takes three years probably. If you give me your life and you give me what I need from you and you really let me have you and let me do in your life what I need to do to get it done, I'll have you in three years. I'll put you toe to toe with anybody in this country when it comes to the Bible. I will.

But even in that, I want to tell you something. I give you two years more. When I preach sermons like this that have a tendency to maybe I don't want to ever damage a young Christian because young Christians sometimes take things to heart and think I'm talking to them. So I like to quantify what I'm saying. Let me just say that if you've been saved five years or less, I'm not talking to you. But I am talking to you from this standpoint: this ought to be your desire and your goal. This is what you want to attain to. But I don't have any right to hold you accountable at that point. Some of you have been saved longer than that, but maybe you've never been in a place where you had the chance. I understand that too. I guess what I'm saying is, let this thing hit you wherever it hits you. I don't care. Let it hit you.

Do you ever notice that all nations have armies? From Genesis, the first war in the Bible is in Genesis 14. You're going to find that from that point on, every nation has an army. You're going

to find when we get into the New Testament, every nation has an army. You're going to find that today as we speak, every nation has an army. But within each army, there will always be an elite group. In every army, there'll be what we call a professional soldier, someone who is a professional. His business is war. He doesn't complain about his orders. He wasn't drafted. He enlisted with a mindset that he wanted to be the very best he could be. He wasn't satisfied with just being an ordinary soldier, though there's certainly nothing wrong with being an ordinary soldier. I don't want to give that impression this morning, because you'd look for a long time to find somebody that has more respect for military people. But I'm saying this, it's a truth, it's a fact: in every army, in our own army, there are elite groups.

There's an old saying in the army that a soldier has a right to complain. Maybe in the regular army, they do. A lot of times, there's a lot of complaining. I know that back in my Vietnam days, the draft was in place. A lot of guys got drafted and didn't want to go into the army. It made for a very bad army, and they knew that. After the Vietnam travesty, they did away with the draft. They wanted to go with a volunteer army. They figured that men and women who volunteered to go into the service would become that professional soldier more than somebody that was conscripted. There's a lot of merit to that, I guess. But I found that even in the all-volunteer army, you'll find soldiers, sailors, marines, Air Force people, who when they get in, they're there because they want to get an education out of it. They want to get some training. Many pilots go to be pilots because they want to sell it to some airline someplace and make a million dollars after they get out. A lot of people have ulterior motives. I'm not saying anything wrong with that. The army is a great opportunity. But I'm saying within the army, there's that guy whose business is war. He lived for one thing.

I have a friend of mine. I haven't seen him for a couple of years. He's a Lee's Summit police officer. I've known him for years. I met him through one of my Bible studies years ago that I used to do in some of the surrounding businesses that people would get me into. This man is the perfect warrior. He did his stint in the Navy and was with the Navy SEAL team out in Coronado. Once he got discharged, he didn't really get discharged; he stayed in a SEAL team reserve. This guy was your perfect picture of what I'm talking about. Not only was he a great soldier, he was a great Christian. He believed the book, loved the Word of God. Right now as we speak, I know where he's at. I don't know where he's at for sure, but I know what he's doing. He's hunting down Bin Laden right now. He's been in the first Gulf War. He had three deployments over there and just stayed. He's had four deployments in this war. This kid lived for one thing: get in the bush, find out where his country's enemies are, and then chew their rear end. He lived for one thing. He's the kind of guy that he'll stand on a seashore, look out at the sea, and you'll say, "Hey, what are you looking for?" He'll turn at you and say, "I'm looking for a war." He's an incredible guy. If I were Bin Laden, I wouldn't stay too long in the same place, because this guy will find you. He is a professional. In a lot of ways, he's my hero. I've always looked at him and thought, "That's exactly what a real soldier should be." And more than that, "That's exactly the way a child of God should be." A professional. No nonsense. And yet, he's a great guy.

I have the utmost respect. I read Tom Brokaw's book a number of years ago that talked about our greatest generation. As far as I'm concerned, in the 20th century, the greatest generation was the

men who fought in World War II. There is so much you can learn from them. I've tried in my lifetime to contact those guys. I could sit here and tell you stories. I could tell you stories about the USS Indianapolis that secretly took the A-bomb to Tinian. Coming back from Tinian, it was such a secret mission that nobody knew where they were or what they were doing. The ship sank in 15 minutes. Of 2,100 men who went into that water, only 200 came out. The sharks took the rest. You ought to hear those stories.

I've had in my lifetime some of the greatest privileges. I've had the privilege to interview or sit down and talk with 15 Medal of Honor winners. The 15th one was last weekend. I met and talked to the only surviving Medal of Honor winner in Missouri. He got it in Vietnam as a Navy Corpsman. Incredible guy, incredible story. I talked to Bobby Dunlap who won the Medal of Honor on Iwo Jima. He's dead now. I sat in his living room, asked him the question. He told me his version of the story, and then I went back in my big old book. I read the account. Tommy Dunlap lied to me. He minimized his part in that thing like it was no big deal. Wow, what a man he was.

Right down from my house, there in that little cemetery off 83rd Street, all by himself, there's a guy that, I forget his name right now. I stopped by from time to time, and I looked him up in the book at one point, but there's one little plaque right there, right under the flag, all by itself. Probably nobody in this city knows who he is or even knows that it's there. And there he is, Medal of Honor winner in World War II in Germany. I'll tell you, there's something about those guys. Those guys had something about them that's lacking today. They had something, and now they're lost men for the most part. I shudder to say this, but for the most part, they're probably lost and in hell if they died without Christ. I know some of them were probably saved, but let's face it, most of them probably weren't. But as unsaved men, they had something inside of them that got them through what nothing else could get them through. You ought to hear the way they talk.

I'm telling you, the movie, "Saving Private Ryan," was a real eye-opener. Many, three or four generations had lost the concept of World War II and the sacrifice. All you've got to do is watch the opening scene, brother, when they're coming off that landing craft, and those German MG42s are just ripping them down to pieces, and watching what happened when they get on that beach. Most people don't know this, but "Saving Private Ryan" was based on a real true story. It wasn't Ryan, it was the Niland brothers. The Niland brothers were the true brothers that lost their boys, and they brought one of them. The story has a true element to it. It's just some of the names were changed, but it was based on a true story. Most people don't even know that.

How many people today watch a soldier walk down an air terminal, or walk downtown, or whatever, and see on his patch the 101st Airborne Division, and know the great, historic stand that the 101st Airborne made at Bastogne? How many people see somebody from the 82nd Airborne Division, and understand that the oldest division in the American Army, it goes all the way back to the All-American Division back in World War I? Who hasn't seen on the flash of a guy's patch a Ranger tab, or Special Forces tab? Who doesn't know when they look out and see that shield of olive drab with a big red one on it, knowing it's the 1st Infantry Division, toughest outfit in the Army? Who doesn't know about the Marine Recon, the British SAS, the Japanese

Imperial Marines, or even in the German Army in World War II with the Waffen SS? Every Army has had an elite group that has stood head and shoulders above the regular personnel in the Army, whose business is war. Israel was no different.

There are some great parallels here between what we're going to read here in a moment, and your life and my life. David's mighty men of valor, David is their captain. They fought for him, head and shoulders, above the regular Israeli Army. They had merited distinction because of three things that you find in their stories, and I'm telling you, if you want to preach someday, if you want to be a pastor in this mess called Christianity today, these are what's going to separate the men from the boys. You put these three things in your life. This ought to be the goals of your life. This is where you ought to be at after five, six, seven, eight years. This is what you ought to be trying to attain in your life. He said, "Any man who becomes a soldier for Christ, he doesn't mix himself with the affairs of his life. He separates himself out. He gets one vision, and that vision is, 'I'm a soldier for Jesus Christ, and I'm going to please the captain of my salvation.'"

I've told you from day one, never made any bones about it: this church isn't for everybody. I tell you that all the time. When you look at this story here, you're going to find some great parallels. Christ is the captain of your salvation. In the army of Christianity, it's no different. Most Christians are National Guard Christians. They're only soldiers on the weekends. They go out to their regular jobs, and that's not a slam to the National Guard. I'm just telling you, they're Army Reserve, but let's face it, if you ever were in the Army, and you were an RA, regular Army, you didn't have a lot to do with the National Guard, because they were going home, and you were going to battle someplace. But that's the way most Christians are. They live their lives where they want to, and they put their Army uniform on when they go to church on Sunday, just like they do when they go to training on the weekends.

Some great parallels. America has no stomach for war. That's why we are pulling out of the war in Iraq, and that's why we are going to lose the war in Iraq. We have forgotten already in just five or six short years the travesty of 9/11. We've forgotten that there's a whole bunch of people out there that eat, sleep, and drink for one reason, and exist for one reason, and that is to kill us. Just as hard as we're trying to get out of war, and just as hard as we're trying to make excuses all around, they are staying up three times harder to work at killing us. This country is going to get hit. You can mark it down, me as a prophet. We are going to get hit. Maybe not in Kansas City, but someplace.

Here's what happens: when we get hit, we don't retaliate. We start putting fingers of whose fault it was. "Why we got hit?" We've got our battle plans in the Pentagon. They get their battle plans off of CNN. We tell them everything we're going to do. We even broadcast the dysfunctional government we have. I'm telling you, man. In World War II, before D-Day, we lost 5,000 men on one beach in D-Day. The week before D-Day, they were practicing amphibious landings over on the north shore of Scotland, and a German E-boat snuck in and sunk three or four of the transports. They lost 1,000 guys in practice before anybody ever hit the beach on Normandy. Nobody in America knew it until five years after the war. Because you didn't shoot your mouth off in the press back then. We didn't want the Germans reading our morning newspapers and say, "Okay, attack them here." But times have changed.

As America has no stomach for war, American Christians have no stomach for the spiritual war. There's a great parallel between where our country is politically and where our churches are spiritually, if you haven't figured it out yet. Now, I want to show you three things in these four men's lives that set them apart from the rest. Very frankly, these ought to be your goals, and I'll just tell you right up front: this is what I look for. I'm not under any illusion that I'm going to build a church of 10,000 people. I'm not. I know that that's not probably in the cards. I don't want it in the cards.

In fact, I was talking to Ray Stewart yesterday down there at Jachtack. We were talking about some things, and we were talking about how dysfunctional churches become when they become humongous churches. How the pastor loses touch with everybody. What happens is this: in every case, it's true. I've been in this business for 36 years. I'm not some newcomer. I'll tell you exactly how it goes. When you get big as a pastor, you think you're special. You start getting a salary bigger than your people. You start living better than your people. You start, and pretty soon, you're distancing yourself from your people. He said to me, "How do you fix that?" And I said to him half-jokingly, "It's true, but I don't know if I got... Here's what I do. I think every church, every five years, ought to sit down and say, 'Hey, look, you're not cutting it. Why don't you go someplace else?'"

That's the only way I know how to do it. I say, "Excuse me, sir. You've been here five years. What ministries are you in? What are you doing? Are you this? Are you that? Have you done this? Have you done that?" "Well, no, we're still trying to get our schedule worked out." "Here's five churches. Will you go check these out next week?" Now, you can't do that. I don't think you can. I get another year. We're only four-year anniversary. I'm still kicking it around. I'll come back to that in a minute. But this is what I look for.

I'm not under any illusion. I was talking to Joe this last week. Joe was coming over. Joe asked me a question about Thursday night about the Seventh Great Awakening. Joe asked me, "Was there going to be another Great Awakening?" And I said, "Joe, no, there's not." Then I explained to him why. I'm not under any illusion. I know my Bible and I know history. I don't know much else in life, but I know that. I'm telling you this: there's not going to be another great revival. Kidding yourself that you think it is, or trying to bring one about, you're wasting your time.

I understand my orders. I'm a student of history. I'm a student of psychology. I'm a student of science. I'm a student of the arts. I'm a student of all the religions in the world. I'm a student of human nature. I understand the Bible is the greatest book that God ever gave man to read that puts the whole thing together. I know where I'm at in relationship to the Second Coming of Christ. I've taught you that in the last four or five months with the seven periods of church history coming through Revelation. You ought to know where you're at.

I know what my standing orders are. I'm a Christian soldier. This may be a church. It's only a church because that's what I've got to call it. It's a recruit depot. It's a training ground. It's a place where you take raw young men and young ladies and turn them into Christian soldiers, to get you ready to take part in this war. But I want to tell you something. We got the dirtiest deal in the

world. We got the dirtiest deal that anybody in any army could have living where we're living. We're in the last minutes of the church age before the rapture takes place.

IV. The Rear Guard Action

When the orders came down from the old man, let me tell you something, they were the dirtiest orders any soldier hates to hear. I don't care where you're at. When this order comes down, you say to yourself, "Why me?" The order is the most despicable order that any soldier doesn't want to hear. The order is: "We're called to hold a rear guard action." I'll tell you what it is in military terms. You're cut off. You're surrounded. You've got maybe a division of 10,000 guys. They're all going to get killed if something doesn't happen. So what you do is you take all of your men except maybe one brigade, 400 men, and you call that commander in. This order is never passed down through radio. It never comes down through paper. The commanding officer, general, colonel, lieutenant colonel, whoever it is, he'll come down and give it individually to the guy that's in charge.

In a brigade, it'd probably be a major. He'll call him in and he'll say, "Look, I need you to hold a rear guard action." That means you're not getting out. That means the rest of your boys are going to get out, and you're going to lay your life on the line so 10,000 can escape and only lose 400 men. You're going to put out the perimeter on the left flank, the right flank, and the central flank. You're going to make as much noise and hoopla as you can. You're going to fire as much as you can and make them think all 10,000 guys are there, and they're going to hit you on all three points or all three fronts, and they're going to wipe you out. Nobody's coming to get you. Nobody's going to be able to help you. You have to lay down a sacrifice bunt, and you're going to pay the price so these guys can fight again. The commander says, "Yes, sir." He's a professional. That's his job.

I've got my orders. My orders are in the last days. This church is to stand as a rear guard action. We're to hold the line. We're to preach the book in a world that doesn't preach it anymore. We're to stand true to the book and the teachings and help young men and women in their marriages and their families with their kids. We're to reach the lost and touch this world, but we're a rear guard action. We ought to sacrifice. We're going to get left out. We're going to get made fun of. We're going to get ridiculed. We're going to get clobbered. That's okay. Wait until my Commander-in-Chief comes back. We'll see who read the orders, right? We'll see who got it from headquarters.

When I start thinking about this, I think about December 7th, not Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor was a travesty. It was a terrible time. It almost broke our back in the Pacific. But the real tragedy didn't happen on December 7th. It happened on December 8th. When you talk about somebody paying a price, when you talk about what took place, I think about there, right after they attacked Pearl Harbor, they attacked the Philippine Islands. Those Philippine Islands out there had about 60,000 to 80,000 American troops on them and British. Once we got devastated at Pearl Harbor, there was no way. No help could go to the guys on Corregidor and Bataan in the Philippines. No way.

They got the orders that there was no help coming. They got the orders that they had to hold out while the Japanese were pouring in troops and attacking them. They didn't have any food. They ate their own horses. Sometimes men only had four or five rounds of ammunition per man. Many times it was an out-and-out bayonet charge. Those men held out, and then after they couldn't hold out any longer, they marched them 60 miles in a blazing hot Filipino sun to a Japanese prisoner camp called the Bataan Death March. You don't even know anything about it. You sit here this morning speaking English instead of Japanese because somebody laid down a sacrifice without anybody coming.

MacArthur left, but before MacArthur left, he called the commanding officer and he said, "I've been ordered out by the President of the United States. Your job is to hold a rear guard action for as long as you can." That lieutenant colonel or Brigadier General Saludan said, "Yes, sir." He didn't complain. He didn't say, "Well, why doesn't the other guy get to go?" "Well, I don't think I'm going to join this church if that's the way it's going to be." "Well, I'm going to go get in the Navy. I'll get me a plane. I'll get in the Air Force. This ain't right. Why do all those other people get off and I've got to stay down here? We've got nothing to eat. The Japs are all around them. They hear them guns. They get closer every night." No, no. He was a professional. He understood his job was to lay down the sacrifice of a rear guard action. That's your job and my job. I'm going to tell you something: you're going to have to have these next three things if you're going to get that done. That's why in most cases it won't get done.

I can't speak for all Christianity. I can't speak for other churches. I can speak for this one. I told you when we started, I'd just be satisfied if God gave me 30. Thirty men and women that'll get these three things done. We'll get it done.

Now, here's what it says here. 2 Samuel 23:1 says:

2 Samuel 23:1

Now these be the last words of David.

There's a great parallel between Paul and David. The thing I like about it is the fact that when they die or come down to the end of their life, they're both thinking about the same thing: young men that they've trained for the ministry. David is thinking about the mighty men of valor whom he built a bond with that most men in combat build, and it's unbreakable. Paul had a bond with guys like Timothy, Barnabas, Silas. It was unbreakable. In both cases, when Paul writes the book of Ephesians, that's the book that talks about the church. He's in prison.

You ever read over in Ephesians 6, the whole armor of God that he gives us? You ever look at that? This is like unto the armor of a first-century Roman centurion. In the first century, the Roman army was the greatest army in the world. Up at Fort Leavenworth in tactics, they still teach some of the Roman formations. The basic frontal attack of a tank formation was solidified basically with a Roman army all the way back in the first and second century. It's incredible. Old Paul sitting in jail and he's watching those soldiers march up and down. He's saying to himself, "If I could get God's people to have the discipline, to have the courage, to have all of the things that the Roman soldiers have for the Roman Empire, if I could just get God's people that

dedicated, we'd turn this world upside down." So when he wrote the armor of God, he wrote it into a format of a first-century Roman soldier and then told Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

I've got one focus, folks. One focus. And that is to please Him who's called me to be a soldier. I've been called and ordered for a rear guard action in Kansas City. That's to muster every man, every woman that wants to dedicate themselves to that calling and stand side by side till Jesus comes back, hold the line. We don't get into politics. We don't get into playing little games. We don't get into fooling around with this and that. We get into understanding our job, picking up our weapon, and manning our post.

The thing I like about Memorial Day, the war movies are on all day today. You think I'm missing them? Thank Jesus for DVDs. My recorder is stacked up, lined up, fired up. I'm getting them all. I like them because most people never take the time to get to know me the way I have a method, everything I do. The war movies that were made during the war, they're a psychological study because when you watch them and you've got ones like "Wake Island," it's coming on this weekend, you've got to watch that. You've got ones like, oh, there's a bunch of them on this week and they're great, "Bataan's" another one.

What happened is this: when the Japs hit us at Pearl Harbor, we had a lot of bad stuff happen for the next six or seven or eight months, almost the next year. I haven't lost sight of this now, have you? I'm coming back to this. Don't forget this. Don't get so enthralled with my great speech and my oratorical abilities that you lose sight of this picture. You're going to want to buy this for \$1,000 when we're done today. I can't. I've got to give it to the guy that takes over the church when I go. It's going to him.

Anyway, during the war, it was dark days. During the dark days of the war, America needed some good news. So Hollywood went to work and they took the battles that we were winning or even the battles that we were losing. They put them on the movie screen. People flocked to see them. The movies had a psychological motive behind them. It always showed the Japanese. You always see the Japanese and they're always really wicked looking. When they shoot Americans, they're always laughing or they're enjoying it. The Americans are all clean-cut, good-looking, all-American boys. They die in the most unglamorous but yet with great honor way.

Here's how it works: the Japanese always look like they're going to win. And then in the movie, they turn it around and the Americans win. In the movie theaters, they were cheering at the end of the movies. Watch this weekend. If you get to watch any of them. At the end of the movie, sometimes they don't cut it all the way off. You see, honest to goodness, you'll see right down under there, it says, "Buy your war bonds in this theater today." That's a hallmark that it was put out during the war. At the end, when everybody was just slobbering at the mouth to kill the Japanese and the Germans, they paid 20 cents for a movie and bought war bonds for \$6,000. It was all psychological. I love it.

My favorite scene is, they're down there and the Japs are winning, and they're killing everybody and all these fair-haired, good-looking guys are getting killed. Everybody's crying because they're thinking of their sons or their nephews, whatever. Then when it turns around, here's this

thing, this is my favorite scene. This guy, he's got a big old crane and this Jap tank is coming down and shooting everybody. It shows inside the tank and the Japs are laughing, shooting the guns and everybody dies. Well, this guy scoops his tank up with a steam shovel, picks it up about 40 feet in the air. The Japs now are going, "Ah!" They're screaming inside. You can just see the people in the theater just yelling. One Jap comes out on the top of that tank and a big old grimy-faced Marine, a typical Marine, M1 helmet, grimy all over, Thompson submachine gun, big old cigar out of his mouth. He gets up there and he goes, "Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom!" The Jap, oh, they fall, scream, they fall down there and die. Everybody's clapping. The guy in the thing says, "What are you shooting for?" The old Marine says, "I was afraid it'd fall and kill him." I love it. But that's what you're up against. I love it.

Now I want to read this here. 2 Samuel 23:8-10.

2 Samuel 23:8

These be the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite: he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.

2 Samuel 23:9

And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away:

2 Samuel 23:10

He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.

Let's pray. Father, we thank You. Thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ, and thank You for saving us. We love You, Lord, and we ask You today to take what we've got to talk about and make the application on this great day when we stand and look back at the sacrifices that were made for You and for me, Lord, and these people to be free today. And yet, Lord, the Bible says that we're to be living sacrifices to You. Don't ever let the Marine Corps Memorial on Iwo Jima and the sacrifices that were made overshadow the sacrifices made on Mount Calvary. Mount Suribachi and Mount Calvary have suffering, have death, have agony in common. But one produced death, and the other one produces life. Help us to never lose sight of that in Jesus' name, for Your sake we ask it. Amen.

V. Three Qualities of David's Mighty Men

Now, the first thing that comes to light as I read down through here is something that you've got to have that gets you through tough spots. I'll tell you what, if you don't develop this, you aren't going to make it. It's determination. It's a very simple thing, but you have to be determined.

I look down here and it says the odds were 800 to 1 in 2 Samuel 23:8. He slew 800 men at one time. That tells me this:

1. You're always going to be outnumbered. There's never going to be a time as a Christian where the odds are going to be even. You better get that down. There's never a time when it's going to be an even fight spiritually. You're going to be outnumbered by many things. Sometimes it takes absolute determination to get through what you've got to get through to make it. That's the first thing I see.

Then the second thing I see is this: he's alone. He's by himself. You better prepare yourself for the day God puts you someplace where there are no other Christians. You better prepare yourself someday and live every day of your life when you get to that point. Because when you get there, determination to do what God wants you to do will be the only thing you've got to keep you going. You won't be able to pick up a phone and call your preacher. You won't be able to call your Christian friends. You won't be able to get in a point with me to come over and solve your problems. You're going to have to, through determination, stand on your own sometimes by yourself. Against great odds, it takes determination to do it. You better start building that into you right now. You're going to be alone in this fight, and you might as well get it set in your mind it is just you and God. Because at the end of the day, most of your friends, when push comes to shove, will not be your friends. The person sitting next to you, behind you, in front of you, that you think is your friend will sell you out so fast you won't know what hit you. There'll be times that your own family will sell you out. There'll be times that your best friend will sell you out. God forbid, there'll be sometimes your husband or wife will sell you out. But the bottom line is this: you stand determined!

Look at the next guy. Eleazar, the son of Dodo. I always say this, I've got to tell you the truth. I don't think it's Dodo, I think it's Doo Doo. I say Dodo, they didn't have full names back then. They had, "This guy's the son of so and so," and that's how you remember people. I don't think it's Dodo at all. It's Doo Doo. I'd like to have a name, Doo Doo. I'll bet it was Doo Doo, sir. I bet you didn't make fun of him. I bet they were naming a kid Doo Doo all over the place. Take for that whatever you want.

2 Samuel 23:9

And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away:

2 Samuel 23:10

He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword:

That's what it takes. It takes determination, not just to be determined yourself, but determination with the Word of God. He became one with the book, one with the Word. When he was done slicing them up, he couldn't drop that sword. The muscles of his arm and his hands had claved to that sword. He had become, through determination, one with the Word of God. Some of you started studying your Bibles back there. We started coming through the books of the Bible. Where are you today with it?

All my life I've seen people that say, "Oh, I want to study the Bible. I want to study the Bible. Can I come over and study with you?" You bet you can. After about two months, three months, six weeks, four weeks, they don't come back anymore. They really don't want to study it. There's no real determination. It's a fun thing. They think that, "Oh, this is fun. Let's go do this." Or "Go study the Bible. Bible, give me this. Do I want to give me that?" You've got to work it out yourself. When you get in there and we just look at each other and you say, "Don't you want to give me something?" And I say, "No, I don't. Dig it out yourself. I'm just here to help you." We find out what your determination is all about. We find out how quick to bail out. We find out how quick it becomes so hard when the work gets to it.

I'm telling you, you've got to know that weapon. You've got to know that weapon inside and out. You've got to be able to take that book apart every way you can. When I was in basic training, they'd wake us up at four o'clock in the morning. We started out with M14, then switched over to M16. They'd get us up at four o'clock in the morning, still bleary-eyed, having just gotten to bed a couple hours ago after a 20-mile march. That old DI got down there at the end, made us get down on the Squad Bay, take our M16s out on the rack. He walked down there and just about the time my eyes got adjusted to the light where I could begin to see, he'd turn off the lights, black, and he'd say, "Tear them apart." He'd walk down the end of that bay, and all you'd hear was clicks, springs, bang, bing, bung, bang, rifles being disassembled. He'd walk down the end of that bay, which is about twice as long as this. He'd get down to that thing. He'd turn the lights back on. He'd just stand there for a minute until your eyes got adjusted to it again, and he'd turn them back off, and he'd say, "Put them back together." He walked back down that line again. By the time he got down to the end of that line, he walked back. You had to pull your trigger to make it go click. If you don't have an M16 put back the way it's supposed to be, it won't go click. It may go "kafunk." It may go "kabang." It may go "kaboom." But it isn't going to go click. There were mainspring housings and trigger springs and bolts laying all over the place. You see, you get out in the field someplace in the middle of the night, and your rifle jams. You've got to be able to know how to take it apart blindfolded.

On the spiritual side, you get in this war, you get in this combat, you better know how to take that weapon apart blindfolded. You better be able to stand and open that book up and lay it out book, chapter, verse, wherever you've got to go. That's your weapon. But it takes determination to get it. You've got to know that weapon. You start the Word of God, you get into the Word of God, and you get it down. I'm telling you, I've heard every excuse in the world over the years. "Well, I've got to get my schedule worked out." Ten years later, you're still working it out. "Well, I'm awful busy." We'll see the urgency to Christ, what busy was. "Why are you going to do this? I've got to do that." "Well, I'm trying to get it all worked out." Yeah, they never get it worked out. It's not that you're bad people. It's simply you lack determination. Determined to learn that book. Whatever it takes. You've got to have self-discipline. You've got to have priorities. You've got to have determination. I've told you many, many times, the only thing worse than a dysfunctional person is a dysfunctional person who doesn't know they're dysfunctional.

Now, I want to look at the next guy. Look at 2 Samuel 23:14.

2 Samuel 23:14

And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

2 Samuel 23:15

And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!

2 Samuel 23:16

And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD.

2 Samuel 23:17

And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.

Loyalty

The next great concept you've got to have is the concept of loyalty. What a picture this is of loyalty. I don't know if you know the spiritual significance, but the nation of Israel had been kicked out of their own little city. Bethlehem means "the house of bread." It's the place where Jesus was going to be born. It's now in the hands of the enemies of God's people, the Philistines.

Here's the scene. I love it. They're back there maybe four or five hundred yards, looking down into that city. They probably have trenches or parapets dug in. I can just see how this thing goes. I just know how this thing works. I've been around military men all my life. I know exactly how they think. I know the loyalties that get built when you've got a good commander. Good commanders don't stay in the rear with the gear while you go out to fight. Good commanders say, "Follow me," and lead you into the fight. A good commander will say, "I will be the first one on the battlefield, men, and I will be the last one off." That's what a good commander does. That's what David was. That's what Jesus is, the Captain of your salvation.

Here's what happened. I'm going to break this down into the 20th century, New Testament, Bob version. Everybody else does it. Why can't I? Old Testament. They're dug in. Bethlehem down there. Those boys are all lined up in those trenches. They're watching down there. About that time, David comes out of the CP bunker. He's the captain. They all stand to attention, and he says, "At ease, boys. No problem." He walks up there, looks down over that thing. I know what Bethlehem meant to David. And that well there is very special to David. You need to go find out why sometime in your Bible. Old David, he tucks that thing down there, and he picks up that starlight scope and looks down there, and sees that old well. He sees those Philistines whooping and hollering down there. He loses himself in his thoughts from it, and he says, "Man, I just can't believe that God's city and God's well is in the hands of those Philistines. Man, what I'd give for a drink of that water. Ah, well." He turned that thing off and says, "Boys, I'm turning in. You guys make sure you check the guard roster now before you go to bed. Night, men. Night, captain." And he goes.

But at that time, three of them sitting right there heard what he said. They looked at each other and they said, "What are you thinking?" "I'll tell you what I'm thinking. I think we ought to go down there and kick a little Babylonian behind and get my commander some water." He says, "Let's do it. We're going to get ourselves busted if we get caught." "Ah, the old man's worth it. Let's go get him some of that water." "Okay, let's do it." They love to fight Philistines. Imagine it. Dark night. A few campfires down there in Bethlehem. Those three guys strapping on their trench knives, taking off all their helmets and all the gear that rattles. They slither over that parapet and they start crawling down there. They come up to a wall down there and there's a big old Philistine standing there, stupid idiot looking the wrong way. He's checking all the drinking and partying going on. Bad mistake. That old Israeli boy goes down there and pulls out that old boot knife. Jumps up there, pulls his knife high, sticks that knife in what the Japanese call the wind tunnel, and infant, ragdoll man, down he goes. Pull him out of the way.

They get to the next wall. There's that well. Three of them. They huddle up and they said, "Okay, boy, standard operating procedure. You take the right flank, there's a guard over there, you've got to get him. I'll go down the middle. Stand there after you attack it. Right flank, left flank, somebody up the middle. I'll go for the water." They said, "Okay." Reach down there, they start screwing their silencers on their Uzis. Put those things over, man. Two of them go over the wall. That big old Philistine walks over here, about that time he turns around, right between his eyes, down he goes. The other one hears something, turns around, right between his eyes he goes. The other guy goes up the middle. The other two guys cut out the flanks and they lay down suppressive fire if somebody comes. He's putting that canteen down that well, down to get that water, going to get that water and that canteen starts bringing it up. They're saying, "Come on, come on! We aren't going to get away with this forever." Put the cap on. About that time they get to the wall, here comes the relief guard around the corner. One of them turned around and sprayed the relief guard, somebody gets off a shot and all hell breaks loose. Every Babylonian Philistine in that place grabs his weapon. The flares go off, the searchlights go off, the tracers are flying. Those guys are zigzagging up that hill, running for everything they're worth. The bullets are zipping by them and they're up there half laughing, half crying, half yelling, and they're going up that thing. The Israelis now know something's going on and they say, "Hey, that's our three guys! Give us some covering fire!" Then their tracers start opening up, and the 40 millimeters start zooming over and the mortars start going down and the flares are flying over the place. Those three guys are trucking up that hill and their hands are in the mud. It was a lot longer going back than it was going down. They get over that thing, climbing that thing, exhausted. The bullets stop, the searchlights go out, the flares settle down, and they're laughing and then all of a sudden they're standing with their hands on them as the captain. They look at each other and they hold that canteen up and they say, "Sir, we heard what you said. We just want to get you the water you wanted." It smote him to his heart, their loyalty.

Your first loyalty is to that book and the Lord Jesus Christ. Bar none. What did David do? David took that water and he said, "I can't drink this. These men put their lives in jeopardy. I'll give it to the Lord." He dumped it out. He didn't partake of the water. He gave it to God who wanted Bethlehem back even more than David did. Double loyalty. Your first loyalty is to God. Then God's loyalty comes back to you. Then loyalty goes to your church. I don't want your loyalty.

You give your loyalty to God, your loyalty will be right with me where it needs to be. Too many preachers demand people's loyalties. I don't want your loyalty. I want your loyalty to God first and then it will come back the way it's supposed to. Follow the chain of command. Loyalty. What an incredible concept.

The greatest example I've ever read in military history of loyalty was a Japanese lieutenant called Lieutenant Onoda. Lieutenant Onoda in 1945 was smuggled into the Philippine Islands to be a spy on the Americans that had landed in the Philippine Islands. He got up in the mountains, never found out the war was over. Lieutenant Onoda fought until 1974. Thirty years in the mountains of the Philippines. When they finally realized there was still a Japanese soldier up there, ten, fifteen, twenty years later, they dropped leaflets, they put food out to him, left him notes. He wouldn't quit. He tried to use loudspeakers, tried to get some of his old buddies. He quit when they finally had to dredge up his old battalion commander that was still alive, fly him out to the Philippine Islands, bring him out in the jungle, and called out his name. When his commanding officer relieved him, he said the war is over. You give me thirty God's people that will fight like that and I'll take this town for Christ. You give me thirty men and women that will stand like that and take that kind of loyalty that won't quit until the commander comes back. He didn't have any food. He ate rats, bugs, and snakes for thirty years. How many times do you think he wanted to quit? You ever thought he thought to himself, "What am I doing here? This is terrible." You think his clothes lasted for thirty years, his uniform? You think his shoes did? You think his rifle and his ammunition did? It all rotted away. When that was gone, he found somebody else to keep going because he was determined, because he was loyal, and he stayed all the way to the end.

Some of God's people get in one church, get in one business meeting, don't get their way, and they're gone. You want a good test? I love taking tests. I take tests all the time. Remember a while back, I gave you that series on "Six Marks of Spiritual Growth." It's a test from time to time. I'll give you a good test. I take this test regularly. I don't like it, but I take it. You won't like it either, but you ought to take it. Here's what you want to do to check. Get alone tonight, sometime. Get a piece of paper so you can be brutally honest with yourself, and then pretend in your mind that you're a pastor. You're a pastor of a church. Get in your mind what God has called you to do and what He wants you to do, and then start doing this:

List all the attributes about yourself. Really, be honest. Don't just try to memorize them.

Write down your attendance on Sunday over the last year.

Write down your attendance on Thursday night.

Write down what ministries you're involved in.

Write down how long you've been here.

Mark down the people that so easily pull you away from what God wants you to do.

Write down how much you give. You've got to pay for the bill somehow.

Write down the people you work with.

Write down and make a list if you're somebody who helps solve problems or somebody that causes problems.

Write down about your mouth.

Write down about your attitude.

Write down about your thin skin.

Write down your determination.

Then when you put all those things down and you put all those things in their right place, ask yourself, "If I was pastor, could I build a church with a person like me?" Could I get it done with a person like me if I was the pastor? That's a great test. If I was the pastor, could I count on people like me to build a church in these last days? That's a great question. That'll bring it into reality real quick. I'll tell you what we like to do. We like to fancy ourselves better than we are. We really do. We are so stuck in ourselves and so high in ourselves that we just walk around thinking we've got it all put together. I'll tell you what, it takes a reality test, a little moment of truth in your life, to start listing those things out and find out, if you were the pastor, could you build a church with somebody like you? Great test.

Then the last guy. I guess his quality is what makes it of all the three. We've talked about determination, we've talked about loyalty. But I'll tell you what, this is one that's definitely lacking in Christianity.

2 Samuel 23:20

And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lionlike men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow:

2 Samuel 23:21

And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear.

I love this passage. This is a great passage. I'll tell you what, the last thing this guy has, it tops the three off: he's got courage. And that's what's missing in Bible Christianity.

Courage

I've heard teachers get up and introduce other preachers all my life. They talk about what a great man of God this guy is. Or what a great man of God he is. Let me tell you something. After 36 years in the ministry and smelling them all, seeing them all, and dealing with them all, I've come to one conclusion: there are no great men in Christianity. There are just ordinary men and women who get saved by a great God who find themselves in extraordinary circumstances and through the power of a great book and a great God do great things. But they're not great.

It takes courage. We think about courage. We think about going out and standing at work, don't we? We think about going down on the street corner and preaching, don't we? We think about courage. I'm not saying that's not courage. But I want to tell you something. Sometimes courage is just doing what's right when your emotions tell you to do something else. Sometimes courage is just standing when you know what's right in the face of your friends who don't want to do what's right. All kinds of courage.

I watch everything you do, especially when you meet the criteria that you have what it takes maybe to be what God wants you to be. I watch how you deal with people. I watch how you handle situations. I watch how you handle intense situations that include your emotions. Because if you ever get into leadership, you're going to have to, in the middle of your emotions, in the middle of your own problems, in the middle of everything going around you down the tubes, you're going to have to make sound, biblical decisions based on the book, not on your emotions. You've got to separate it out, folks. I watch how you captain your ball teams. I watch how you win. I watch how you lose. I watch how you make stupid excuses that when you lose your cool in a basketball game or you lose your cool in a softball game, you just talk about the fact that, "Well, that's just the way I am." Well, you need to change the way you are.

Years and years gone by when we had athletic programs. Some of you remember this. I used to have a policy that you had to come three Sundays out of the month to be able to play. Can't do that anymore. You realize that the people come out there. I know you get caught up in the game. The game's the battle. You can't keep your emotions in a ball game, you won't keep them in a battle of life. Now, you may kid yourself and think you will. I've got some news for you. You've got people out there playing softball, volleyball, basketball, whatever you're doing. They may never come to church. You may be the only Bible they ever read. I'm telling you. I watch how you exercise or do not exercise grace, balance, patience, longsuffering, truth. I watch how you deal with what you learn. I watch how you use what you learn. I watch how God takes you and puts you in circumstances to see how you react. I'm telling you, courage is what it takes.

See this picture right here? Ensign George Gay. That's a Devastator. It was replaced by the Avenger about 1943. This took place at the Battle of Midway. He was in Torpedo Squadron Eight. Took off from the Yorktown. Torpedo planes were slow, no armor, and if they didn't have fighter cover, fighter protection, they were sitting ducks. The Battle of Midway was the turning point in World War II in the Pacific. The Japanese had advanced so much, and we were so frail in our Navy, that at the Battle of Midway, it all hung in the balance. The Japanese were never an outgoing army after that. They were always in the defense mode. They were retreating. They never recovered fully from the Battle of Midway.

Battle of Midway is one of the keys. Ensign George Gay was in Torpedo Squadron Eight. Life magazine dated August 31, 1942. He's on the front of Life magazine as a young Ensign pointing to the map of the Philippine Sea, pointing to the Battle of Midway. He was the sole survivor of Torpedo Squadron Eight. It tells the whole story. Lays everything out. They had to find the Japanese fleet. The Japanese fleet, in destroying it and turning it back, was crucial to the success of Midway. The success of Midway was crucial to the whole Pacific. If they didn't stop at Midway, they were going to be in Honolulu. The Battle of Midway was the decisive battle in the

Pacific of World War II, greatly overshadowed by Tarawa, Okinawa, Iwo Jima. It was the key turning point. That was the battle that they had to either stop them or we were caught. They couldn't find the Japanese fleet. We only had two or three carriers left. One of them had been damaged. We had lost all of our battleships at Pearl Harbor. It was just a skeleton force.

They sent out scout planes, and lo and behold, a scout plane found the Japanese armada. They launched their planes. The planes were scattered and launched, and the first planes that got there, normally what they do in an air operation like this is the fighters fly cover. They keep the Zeros off their backs. They strafe the decks to keep the anti-aircraft down while the dive bombers and the torpedo planes go in. A torpedo plane is a tough way to go. You've got to line up at water level about a mile out, and it only goes about 60, 70, tops 80 miles an hour. You've got to hold that thing settled because what you're going to do when you get 100 yards from that ship, you're going to release a torpedo that's going to hit the water. You can't zigzag. You can't move up and down. You've got to hold your course and drop that torpedo.

Torpedo Squadron Eight found the Japanese fleet, radioed for air cover. No air support answered. Absolutely nothing to suppress the flak, suppress the Japanese fighters. The commander of Torpedo Squadron Eight ordered them in without any air cover. They went in in a staggered formation one after the other. The commander went in first. They shot him out of the sky before he got anywhere near. Second guy shot him out. Third guy shot him out. Everybody got shot down before they ever did a thing. George Gay was the only one left. He had already been attacked by Zeros. His engine was only hitting on eight cylinders and he was on fire. His tail gunner was dead. George Gay bore down on that carrier. He could have gone back. He could have said, "I'm hit." He could have said, "I'm injured. I can't get in." He had a thousand excuses not to, but he had the three things that you and I have to have to do the job. He was determined. He was loyal and he had courage, and he bore in on that carrier. He never got the torpedo out. They shot him out of the sky. He landed and he spent three days in the ocean before they picked him up. But he held up the Japanese fleet just long enough for the air cover and the dive bombers to get there. They whacked him and they won the Battle of Midway because one guy had the determination and the courage.

I met George Gay about eighteen years ago. We talked at great length. I told him I was a Christian pastor and I said, "Every day, Mr. Gay, I think about what you did and it motivates me." I said, "I even have the Life magazine that has your picture on the front. It tells the whole story." I said, "Every day in the ministry, I ask God to give me the courage, the loyalty, the determination that you had." He did it for the government, making \$119 a month. About six or eight weeks later, I forget what it was, a friend of mine who also knew him called me up and said, "I've got something for you." George Gay had that painted picture for me. It says, "To Bob Alexander, George Gay, VT-8, 6/4/42, 10/22/89." He sent me that picture. Every message I prepare, every day of my life when I face the ministry, I look at that picture on the wall and I say to God, "See, I don't think George..." I tried to witness to George Gay once and got nowhere. As far as I know, he's in hell. He died about ten years ago. As far as I know, he's in hell this morning. It bothers me terribly. It burdens me so bad. It's a lot of what drives me to be who I am and do what I do.

Here's an unsaved man who probably died and went to hell, who for the government, for \$119 a month, did what he had to do. And I can't get God's people who are saved and on your way to heaven, have the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God in your heart, doing anything for God. What a burden that is. Every day I look at that and I say, "God, make me a George Gay."

When I get too old to pastor and I'm planning my "re-tire-ment." I've watched every pastor in every church who got too old to do it get screwy and get all kinds of weird concepts and ideas. It was the struggle of my life, why these men could do this for so long and then suddenly at the end of life when they got old, just fall apart like a broken record. Then one day I saw it. I understand now that when I get too old for this, I figure I've got 20 years left, maybe 22, 23, 24. Maybe God's got a better plan, maybe it'd be less than that. I don't know. But I figure this: I've got it figured out that I know how I can keep that from happening. I want to tell you right now, the man that takes over this church, that painting goes to him with the admonishment of every day in his life, "Let God make you a George Gay."

I'm telling you folks, Memorial Day, really? What about God's Memorial Day, all through eternity, that looks back on the great battle that you and I are part of? What about the church triumphant and the church militant? You're a member of the church triumphant by getting saved. But I don't think most of God's people even know what the church militant even means anymore. One time they burned an old martyr at the stake, and the Roman Catholic Church came up and stuck their finger in his face, and he says, "We're going to separate you from the church of Jesus Christ. And we're going to burn you this day." He looked at them and he says, "You may separate me from the church militant, but you'll never separate me from the church triumphant." Brother, that's true.

The church militant is your daily warfare down here as a child of God, conducting yourself as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, enduring hardness, doing it by the book. We don't ever have the right or the option. We don't have the right not to do what's right, folks. Not in this business. You goof up in a real war and somebody gets killed. You goof up in this one and somebody dies and goes to hell. We don't have the option not to do what's right. We don't have the option not to make it the very best we are. We don't have the option to give our determination, to give our loyalty, and to give our courage. We don't have that option.

George Gay. I thought about that a thousand times and I asked him, "George, you got shot down and you stayed in the water. Why in the world? It just defies me. Everybody was gone. Nobody was left. You could have gone back and led the other guys there. You could have got off a radio call and got homed in on them and got the other guys there. Why did you think that you, when nobody else made it, nobody else did it, nobody else even got a hit on him, why did you think you could when nobody else did?" He said, "Bob, I never thought about that. All I thought about was the fact that that was my job. I was in a torpedo plane, not a reconnaissance plane. All my boys went down. I was going with them. And that's what I had to do." I thought to myself, "Man, if I could get God's people with those three things in their life, to look at life like he looked at that Japanese carrier, with loyalty, determination, and courage, we'll get it done."

I don't need all of you. I just need 30 of you. I'd like to have all of you, but that's not a reality. Too many USO shows going on out there today. Too many other things sparkling and glittering that just isn't like the old mud in the trench. Sleeping out all night, cold rain, not eating, sacrificing yourself. Sitting out there, but that's where the bond is built. The bond is built in the trenches, in the foxhole. That's where it's built.