

## **We Salute You, Veterans**

### **Dr. Glenn Robertson**

Today is a special Veteran's Day. It is the 100<sup>th</sup> year since the end of WWI, or Armistice Day.

Today I have an infantry hat from WWI. My wife's great uncle, served in the Spanish American War, then he volunteered to serve in the Great War as a tank driver. The army was seeking people to drive their new tanks, those oblong weird looking tanks which were designed to move across the trenches. The army wanted to recruit those who could drive farm tractors, because it was very similar for driving the tanks. This is his tank unit hat with its tank button. What I find most interesting is the newspaper clip about his enlistment in the tank group. The article indicates the tanks were equipped with nitroglycerine with the idea they would explode if hit by a German shell. And, if they did not explode, the men swore an oath to detonate the nitroglycerine so the enemy could not take the tank.

Today, I, we, want to salute you who are our veterans.

Some believe the origins of the military salute may go back to the wearing of metal armor by medieval knights. Their suits of armor included a visor that concealed their faces. When knights would approach a superior, out of respect they would lift their visor so the superior could see their identity. That act, the lifting of the visor, had the motions of raising the hand in salute.

Others say the tradition goes back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century when military men wore hats. At first, they would remove their hat to show

respect. Then, the hats became much larger and included chin straps, making it difficult to remove their hats. So, instead, they began touching the brim of their hat, as a gesture of removing the hat. Eventually, the salute of the hand to the eyebrow became the standard for British, French, and America. American military adopted the navy salute, with the palm facing down. In the navy, sailor's hands were often dirty with oil from the ropes, so it was considered unpolite to show a dirty hand. The palm facing down resolved the issue. There are many other ways the military shows salutes, including sword salutes and gun salutes.

Saluting shows respect. It indicates honor due to the person who is saluted. In the military, superior officers are saluted by lower ranking personnel. This salute is required, except on the battle field where it would place officers in danger or take away from the act of fighting.

Today, on this Veteran's Day, we salute you, our Veterans. Especially from those of us who never served, who have never worn the uniform, nor taken orders, or have gone to assignments where life was at risk or danger, we salute you. We must say we honor you for your service to our nation.

### **David's Mighty Men**

2 Samuel 23:8-39 and 1 Chronicles 11:10-47

2 Samuel 23:8-39 NIVO

<sup>8</sup> These are the names of David's mighty men: Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three; he raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter.

<sup>9</sup> Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty men, he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered at *Pas Dammim* for battle. Then the men of Israel retreated,

<sup>10</sup> but he stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead.

<sup>11</sup> Next to him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. When the Philistines banded together at a place where there was a field full of lentils, Israel's troops fled from them.

<sup>12</sup> But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field. He defended it and struck the Philistines down, and the LORD brought about a great victory.

<sup>13</sup> During harvest time, three of the thirty chief men came down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim.

<sup>14</sup> At that time David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem.

<sup>15</sup> David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!"

<sup>16</sup> So the three mighty men broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the LORD.

<sup>17</sup> "Far be it from me, O LORD, to do this!" he said. "Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?" And David would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the three mighty men.

<sup>18</sup> Abishai the brother of Joab son of Zeruiah was chief of the Three. He raised his spear against three hundred men, whom he killed, and so he became as famous as the Three.

<sup>19</sup> Was he not held in greater honor than the Three? He became their commander, even though he was not included among them.

<sup>20</sup> Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant fighter from Kabzeel, who performed great exploits. He struck down two of Moab's best men. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion.

<sup>21</sup> And he struck down a huge Egyptian. Although the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club. He snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear.

<sup>22</sup> Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he too was as famous as the three mighty men.

<sup>23</sup> He was held in greater honor than any of the Thirty, but he was not included among the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard.

<sup>24</sup> Among the Thirty were: Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem,

<sup>25</sup> Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite,

<sup>26</sup> Helez the Paltite, Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa,

<sup>27</sup> Abiezer from Anathoth, Mebunnai the Hushathite,

<sup>28</sup> Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite,

<sup>29</sup> Heled son of Baanah the Netophathite, Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeath in Benjamin,

<sup>30</sup> Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai from the ravines of Gaash,

<sup>31</sup> Abi-Albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite,

<sup>32</sup> Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan

<sup>33</sup> son of Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite,

<sup>34</sup> Eliphelet son of Ahasbai the Maacathite, Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,

<sup>35</sup> Hezro the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite,

<sup>36</sup> Igal son of Nathan from Zobah, the son of Hagri,

<sup>37</sup> Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, the armor-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah,

<sup>38</sup> Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite

<sup>39</sup> and Uriah the Hittite. There were thirty-seven in all.

Why read the list of David's mighty men? It is not a passage often turned into a sermon. Here is a list of warriors and some of their exploits. So, why take interest in the list?

## 1. We need to remember those who serve.

David had 37 warriors, mighty men who served alongside him. David is considered the greatest Old Testament king. He is the model of ideal king which sets the stage for the coming of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of David, the eternal king of God's kingdom.

David was a warrior-worshiper. He was a musician, poet, a true worshiper of God. Yet, David was also a warrior. As a warrior for God, David made Israel a strong and great nation. Yet David did not fight alone. He did not make the nation of Israel great by himself. David had help. David had his mighty men who fought alongside him to help him make a nation of Israel.

So, in 2 Samuel, the names of these mighty men are **recorded**. We hear some of their exploits. For many, we just hear their names. **Yet it is important that their names are recorded.** When I consider the difficulty of writing in the ancient world, of getting papyrus – it was expensive – and having a scribe put down the writing, it makes it all the more impressive that these names are listed. They are listed here, and again in 1 Chronicles 11. Some of the names and places are difficult to pronounce – Mebunnai the Hushathite, Maharai the Netophathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite – wow! Some of the names are different in Chronicles, and still just as hard to pronounce - Jaasiel the Mezobaite. **What is important is that someone decided that their names were not to be lost and forgotten.**

We too have compiled a list of names of our veterans. We have made a list of 60 names of those who are with us who have served in the military. Your names are written because we do not want to forget what you have done. Some of you have had moments of valor on the field of battle, others of you have just had to endure bad food. Yet, still, you served.

This being Veteran's Day, we honor the living who served. At Memorial Day, we honor those who have died in service.

I have never served. I had polio as a child which would have made it impossible to pass a physical for service. I was never a draft dodger or one who ran away to avoid service. However, I have never had to live under orders, under the rules of others or have to go to assignments against my will. I have never had bombs dropped on me, nor had bullets shot at me, nor had the possibility that I could be sent to a place where life would have been at risk.

So today, Veterans, because you served, we salute you. You served our nation. You took the risks. You took the orders. You gave of yourself.

## 2. No king, no president, and no nation is ever made great without the service and valor of military service.

David's mighty men are listed because no king, no president, and no nation is ever made great without the service and valor of his military personnel.

When Alexander the Great defeated the Persians at Issus in 333 BC, he became the ruler of an empire. Alexander and his men were outnumbered by the Persians, yet they were warriors and determined to win the battle. Alexander had developed a method to defeat his enemies in battle by use of the battle wedge. Usually, enemies lined up in the phalanx, two opposite rows of warriors. Alexander would line up his men in the same fashion. Then he would maneuver them, so they had a packed force – a wedge – that could force its way into a weak position of the enemy's line. Once he broke the line, the enemy's phalanx could no longer defend itself as the Greeks would roll up the side of the line in mass. This was the brilliance of Alexander, who never lost a battle.

General McArthur did the same maneuver in North Korea. When we were stalemated in the conflict, he attacked North Korea on the side with an invasion force using the same wedge concept. He rolled up the North Korean and Communist Chinese forces all the way into China. For this, he was fired. It seems that winning a war is not the most important thing in the political world.

No president, no political party has ever won a war or made our nation independent from invading forces. Wars have been won by military servicemen who have served with valor in the battlefields. Many of them have laid down their lives. Others have survived. Others have given support to those who fought. Yet, it was the service of service men and women which has given us a free nation, and for many places, a free world.

For your service, today, we salute you.

### **3. We must not lose valor and the value of warriors.**

Even with the gospel of peace, God must at times use people who serve as mighty warriors against evil in our world. Even though we live in relative peace in this country, we must take our freedom lightly, nor allow our minds to become soft nor our hands. The weapons of war have been required to make us a free people.

C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, (pp. 35-37) argues that relativism has robbed us of moral courage, the heart that best prevails over the sentiments of intelligence and mere animal desire. He is not necessarily calling for warriors as much as he is calling for courageous virtue, the will to stand for right against wrong.

“In battle it is not syllogisms (i.e., logical arguments) that will keep the reluctant nerves and muscles to their post in the third hour of the bombardment. The crudest sentimentalism ... about a flag or a country or a regiment will be of more use...The head rules the belly through the chest—the seat ... of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments...The operation of The Green Book (a book promoting relativism) and its kind is to produce what may be called Men without Chests....

We remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.”

**In our day we are being told that guns breed violence. NO. Violence is bred by the destruction of values and the lowering of human existence to mere animalism. We have given people compasses with no North and the needle turns aimlessly around. Liberals want to claim value for life by being appalled at mass shootings, while demanding the right to kill infants by mass in the womb.**

**True North comes from God. Relativism comes from kicking God out. Without chests (hearts set to truth) we cannot keep society from melting down into chaos and violence.**

I find it interesting that spiritual leaders in the past connected warrior with worshipper. The warrior had the heart to defend moral values which came from God.

Z. N. Morrell, *Fruits and Flowers in the Wilderness*, came to Texas in 1836 after Independence. Morrell was a preacher who carried a weapon at all times. Sometimes the rifle was his to hunt game for food. Sometimes it was his protection against the bear or warrior

Indians. Sometimes the shotgun was his weapon to keep rebels from interfering in his church meetings. Morrell was also a Marshal. He used weapons to defend the Texas Nation from wicked people.

<sup>3</sup> For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.

<sup>4</sup> For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. (Rom. 13:3-4 NIV)

Thank you, again, Veterans. We salute you today. May we find moral courage to stand for God's true North in a day when people always want the needle to point their way.