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PATRIOTISM



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LONGING FOR HOME

As I've moved deeper in my faith, I've come to realize that the Christian life is not synonymous with support of any country. My true allegiance should be for my heavenly home.



I've only ever been outside my home country once on its nationally-celebrated birthday.

I had just graduated from high school and was in the Netherlands with the Ohio State Fair Youth Choir. We'd had a busy day touring the sites of the region, but ever-present in our minds was that back home, it was the Fourth of July.

Sure, where we were, it was also July 4. We soon recognized there would be no picnics, no parades, and no fireworks – all experiences associated with the American Independence Day observance.

After dinner, we gathered on the back steps of our hotel that led to the edge of one of the beautiful canals in Am-

sterdam. In the dusk of that summer evening, tired and maybe a little home-sick, we sang every patriotic song in our repertoire (and probably some that weren't). But the culmination, as we lifted our voices in the Star-Spangled Banner, was when one of our members appeared carrying the American flag that he'd appropriated from a display in the lobby. With tears in our eyes, we all cheered, realizing a new-found appreciation for our country.

I grew up in the era where at vacation Bible school, we not only said the pledge of allegiance to the American flag but to the Christian flag and the Bible. (See *Patriotism or Nationalism?* on page 16.) To be patriotic was synonymous with being a Christian. So, the first time someone mentioned removing the U.S. flag from the sanctuary of my church, it felt sacrilegious.

As I've moved deeper in my faith, I've come to realize that the Christian life is not synonymous with support of any country. My true allegiance should be for my heavenly home.

This issue takes a look at the tension that most of us feel when it comes to celebrating our country of residence while still looking forward to our home in heaven. It's a thin line to walk, yet such an important one.

I hardly celebrate an Independence Day in the U.S. that my mind doesn't return to that night along the canal in Amsterdam. But these days, those feelings of longing are more likely for my forever home with Jesus and the mansion He's prepared there just for me!



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PLEDGING OUR ALLEGIANCE

Living As Believers in Our Temporary Homes

by Davey Ermold

Long gone are the days of American flags hanging from every house... Now, the national debate revolves around just how tightly we should cling to our American heritage and history, and the extent to which we should seek to separate ourselves from them.



PATRIOTISM CAN MANIFEST ITSELF DIFFERENTLY DEPENDING UPON A PERSON'S VIEW OF THE ROLE OF SOCIETY.



My adult life began in the midst of a crisis that brought about a time of solidarity and harmony among the American people and politicians alike. I was a college freshman leaving my Tuesday morning class on the four Gospels when I was told to find a television, and quickly. In the lounge of our dorm, we watched the events of September 11, 2001, unfold before our eyes. We were in shock; our young eyes too fresh to anticipate the patriotic unity that was about to unfold all over the country.

Long gone are the days of American flags hanging from every house, as well as bipartisan renditions of “God Bless America” on the steps of the Capitol. Now, the national debate revolves around just how tightly we should cling to our American heritage and history, and the extent to which we should seek to separate ourselves from them. We, as believers of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, should be setting the example of how to view our national identity and how much stock we should place in it.

To what extent are we, as the Church, supposed to be patriotic? In light of the Word of God, what should our attitude and posture be towards patriotism?

Patriotism can manifest itself differently depending upon a person's view of the role of society. It is defined as “love for or devotion to one's country.”¹ Regardless of how we

feel that should look on a spectrum, with steadfast obedience on one end and civil disobedience on the other, the definition holds. So how are we as disciples of Jesus supposed to love our country, and be devoted to it? Could our Brethren ancestors help inform and shape the way we view our relationship to our country?

The Early Brethren

While we will share some thoughts from the Word of God in a moment, first consider the view of the Brethren Church in early American society. After forming in Germany in 1708, the early Brethren quickly moved to the American colonies in 1719 to escape religious persecution. They flourished in southeastern Pennsylvania with unbridled freedom to pursue what they felt were lives in line with the commands of the Word of God.

It was only when the American Revolution broke out decades later that the lives of the Brethren were disrupted and they were forced to pick a side. Would they be devoted to England or would they pledge their allegiance to the Colonies attempting to start their nation? Homer Kent, Sr. writes:

“The Revolutionary War brought great trial to the Brethren people. One of their beliefs was that it is wrong for the Christian to engage in carnal conflict. The colonial government had passed a law which was aimed directly at these people and the Quakers, who also opposed war. This law required every citizen of the

colony to subscribe to an oath renouncing allegiance to the British government and pledging allegiance to the colony of Pennsylvania.”²

Some Brethren chose to take the oath and pledge themselves to Pennsylvania. By 1779, the Brethren Annual Meeting condemned such an action:

“On account of taking the attest, it has been concluded in union as follows: Inasmuch as it is the Lord our God who establishes kings and removes kings, and ordains rulers according to his own good pleasure, and we cannot know whether God has rejected the king and chosen the state, while the king had the government; therefore we could not, with a good conscience, repudiate the king and give allegiance to the state.”³

Amid their disdain for war, and because many of them had already signed an oath to England years before in order to enter Pennsylvania, the early Brethren weren't eager to devote themselves to any additional human institutions. They sought a land where they were free to exercise their beliefs apart from becoming wrapped up in the secular affairs of nations. It seems as though their primary interest was adherence, love, and devotion to the Word, not any one particular country, as the definition of patriotism demands.

² Homer A. Kent, Sr., *250 Years... Conquering Frontiers* (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1958) 58.

³ As noted in Todd Scoles, *Restoring the Household* (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 2008) 140-141.

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/patriotism>, accessed 5/2/2019.

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THE BENEFITS OF ROMAN CITIZENSHIP COULDN'T COMPARE TO THE BENEFITS OF THEIR HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP. NEITHER DO OURS AS AMERICAN CITIZENS.



Hold to a Biblical Standard

Regardless of how our Brethren ancestors lived and responded to the world around them, we're held to the standard of the Word of God. Where should our allegiance lie, and what implication does that have for our view of our country? Are there any passages in the Bible that speak to this issue of patriotism, and to what extent are we, as believers, to love and be devoted to our country? Several come to mind that help us shape a theology of patriotism.

First, our primary devotion is to Jesus; our allegiance is to His Kingdom. Paul writes in Philippians 3:20: "For our citizenship is in heaven" (NKJV). This truth would have been all the more poignant to the church at Philippi, given the city's status as a Roman colony in Greek territory (Acts 16:12). The Philippians took great pride in their Roman citizenship; it afforded them a level of protection, rights, and comfort, probably not unlike American citizenship today.

Paul highlights even greater citizenship for the Philippian believers: heaven. The benefits of Roman citizenship couldn't compare to the benefits of their heavenly citizenship. Neither do ours as American citizens. Therefore, our devotion and allegiance to our secular country should never exceed that to our heavenly home. Would that the Holy Spirit grant us the grace to be as passionate about the Kingdom of God as we are prone to be about the state and future of America!

Second, we can consider the case study of the Israelite exile to Babylon.

Keeping true to His promises, God ultimately sent the nations of Israel and Judah into exile due to their disobedience to the Mosaic Law. The prophet Jeremiah ministered to the southern kingdom of Judah around the time of their deportations to Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar. In Jeremiah 29, they're told that they will be in Babylon for seventy years and, during their time in exile, God instructs them to do the following:

"Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace" (vv. 5-7, NKJV).

I believe these instructions to the exiles can serve as guiding principles for how we're to relate to our worldly homes. They provide for us a proper perspective on how we're to live as citizens of heaven in our temporary home in a foreign land. While we won't be on this earth forever, we will be here long enough that we should build and dwell and plant and eat.

The Israelites weren't to despise Babylon and wish for its destruction, either. God commands them to seek its peace, because in Babylon, as a whole, it meant peace for them while they lived there. Another example of performing this duty in a God-honoring way is found in

the prophet Daniel. He not only lived in Babylon during the exile, but he became a high-ranking official in its government, all while being used by God for His purposes and His glory. Certainly, Daniel sought what was best for Babylon, but we're never given any indication that it was ever given a higher priority than the Kingdom of God itself.

Appreciate Freedoms

In light of the Word of God and, secondarily, our Brethren roots, what should be our view of patriotism? Should we love, or be devoted to, our country? I think we can certainly appreciate the freedoms we have in America without making an idol out of her or approving of all her shortcomings.

If we were to evaluate our own lives honestly, we'd be able to gauge what's important. Consider how proud we're to be of a particular nationality, or the time we spend dissecting and discussing the national news, compared with how pleased we're to be children of God, and the amount of time we spend talking about the Word and fulfilling its mission.

Let us not lose sight of these things as we move forward, no matter the political climate, the evening news stories, or where we're at in a given election cycle. May we stand apart from the secular world in prioritizing the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. May our love and devotion to God, our patriotism for the Kingdom of God, have a place of prominence above all else.

Davey Ermold, Th.M., is pastor of Blue Ridge Grace Brethren Church, Winchester, Va.

A CHAPLAIN'S REFLECTIONS ON PATRIOTISM

by Chaplain Mark Penfold (U.S. Army, Col., retired)

Most of the factors that shape our identity are providential gifts from God... It includes gender, the socio-economic context of our biological family, the exposure to divine, biblical and spiritual influences, our education and many more areas.

In early 1987, I received a direct commission as a Second Lieutenant and Chaplain Candidate in the U.S. Army Reserve. Soon after, I drove to Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis. I felt awkward walking into the military clothing sales store in my civilian clothes to buy my first sets of battle dress uniforms, or BDUs, with the required patches and black boots (that I later learned how to spit shine). I put on the uniform and while I was technically an Army officer and may have looked the part, I didn't yet feel like one.

The Shaping of Our Identity

Most of the factors that shape our identity are providential gifts from God. The words God spoke to Jeremiah are true of all persons, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you ..." (Jeremiah 1:4). While the verse encompasses and speaks of God's omniscience, it also has implications to the shaping of our identity and the many factors that are part of it. It includes gender, the socio-economic context of our biological family, the exposure to divine, biblical and spiritual influences, our education and many more areas.

Another one of the providential gifts that shape our identity is that of the country and land of our birth. The language, culture, and even government are gifts from God. During my military service and overseas tours and deployments, I met people from many different

ANOTHER ONE OF THE PROVIDENTIAL GIFTS THAT SHAPE OUR IDENTITY IS THAT OF THE COUNTRY AND LAND OF OUR BIRTH.



countries and types of governments. I worked with French, British, and German officers and had interesting conversations with Iraqi military officers. Regardless of government, they all loved their homeland, their history, language, and culture. They were patriotic. They may like and admire many things about America but most did not want to become Americans. They may have desired improvements in their own countries. But almost to an individual, they were loyal to the land of their natural birth.

However, many other factors that shape our identity are situations and roles that we will have, and typically, embrace throughout our lives. These would include our status in life such as student and eventually profession, marital status, role as parent, and maybe grandparent. How we respond to the Gospel and our spiritual growth is also a part of the shaping of our identity. I'd suggest that learning to be good citizens of an earthly nation has real implications on a sense of spiritual patriotism and allegiance to the purposes and Kingdom of God.

A Text Regarding Citizenship

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy,

but now you have received mercy."
(1 Peter 2:9-10 NIV)

Although written to Christ-believing Jews around 60 A.D., a logical application of the phrase "holy nation" implies that while I am an American citizen, I am also a citizen of another kingdom. If my natural citizenship and love of country is toward the land of my natural birth, in Christ, I am a dual-nation and have a spiritual citizenship and love of a heaven ("holy nation") that comes from my being born again by faith through grace. My love is for an eternal kingdom (unlike any earthly kingdom or nation) is a real love and there are real obligations and implications of patriotism (of a sort) and allegiance for me as a citizen of the heavenly city.

I have learned and accepted many of roles that shape my identity as a person from the providential gifts of my biological parents (husband and father), teachers, spiritual mentors, local church bodies – and often by imitation, for better or worse. Perhaps we learn how to be good citizens of the Church, the Eternal Kingdom of our Savior by being good citizens, or dare I say, patriots, of our earthly home?

Examples of Joseph and Daniel

I believe in mentors and role models. As one who had to learn to negotiate living, but more importantly, serving as a minister of the Gospel in a governmental context, I looked to Scripture to find helpful examples. The most obvious examples of

believers who interacted effectively in civic/governmental roles and in godly ways were Joseph and Daniel.

There stories are strikingly similar in how they ended up in "governmental" service. Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, sold as a slave to a passing caravan of merchants, re-sold as a slave into the Egyptian leader Potiphar's home. Daniel along with some of the most promising young men, is taken as a prisoner to Babylon. Providentially, both men prospered and eventually rose to have historically significant roles in Egypt and Babylon/Medo-Persia.

Both Joseph and Daniel maintained their religious faith and identity. On occasion, both men suffered severe trials and tests to abandon their faith in God. However by God's grace, both prospered greatly. Both serve as historical mentors and role models for us today.

While I'm opposed to speculating as to what patriotism might have looked like for Joseph and Daniel, they did learn to function effectively as believers within pagan society. It is hard to imagine that they were apathetic toward the leaders they served. It appears that when possible, they advised, led, and served to the betterment of their adopted pharaohs, kings, governments, and nations. When not a violation of religion, it seems that both held a sense of dual citizenship, even a sense of loyalty and patriotism to their second country, Joseph to Egypt and Daniel to Babylon and then later the Medo-Persia empire.

I STRUGGLE TO USE JESUS AND THE GOSPELS AS A PATTERN FOR ANY DISCUSSION OF PATRIOTISM, AT LEAST IN THE MODERN SENSE.

Abraham and the Eternal City

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose

*architect and builder is God.”
(Hebrews 11:8-10 NIV)*

Abraham had a concept of city or community that shaped his identity. He was from Ur of the Chaldees, one of the great cities of the Ancient Near East. Abraham’s life is generally accepted by most biblical scholars to be around 2,000 BCE. According to Joshua J. Mark,

the Ur III Period (2047-1750 BCE) and was the age in which the city of Ur reached its height. The great ziggurat of Ur, which

can still be visited in modern times, dates from this period as do most of the ruins of the city and the cuneiform tablets discovered there. The two greatest kings of the Third Dynasty were Ur-Nammu and his son Shulgi who created an urban community devoted to cultural progress and excellence and, in doing so, gave birth to what is known as the Sumerian Renaissance.¹

¹ “Ur.” Joshua J. Mark, April 28, 2011. *Ancient History Encyclopedia* at ancient.eu/ur/.



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UPON [PAUL'S] CONVERSION THERE IS A RADICAL RE-ORIENTATION OF HIS NATIONAL IDENTITY THAT HE REFERS TO AS "GARBAGE."



Abraham was able to envision a greater city, a better city because he had lived in a great city. While it may be rightly argued that patriotism and concepts of citizenship have evolved greatly over four millennia of history, there should be little argument that the many aspects of our identity (even in our fallenness and sinful natures), are shaped, for good or evil, by the language, culture, geography, political and demographic situations in which God has placed each one of us.

Jesus and Patriotism

I struggle to use Jesus and the Gospels as a pattern for any discussion of patriotism, at least in the modern sense. It's a bit like walking through a minefield. The Gospels, perhaps more than any other biblical genre, are appealed to in support of or against patriotism. But what is clear from Jesus' words is that we do have some responsibility to the government. Accordingly, in Luke 20:20-26, "give back to Caesar (taxes) what is Caesar's."

Jesus' influence on his disciples is probably most clear in the encounter between the Apostles and the Sanhedrin in Acts 5. After being directed to cease preaching about Jesus, Peter speaks on behalf of the group and says, "We must obey God rather than human beings."

I understand there are areas when my earthly and citizenship overlap and intersect. But there are also those times and situations when the priority of a heavenly citizenship as a believer and disciple of Jesus which I can only

grasp through Scripture, supersedes that of any human laws or allegiances. My allegiance to Jesus Christ and his kingdom as revealed in Scripture should influence, shape and guide every action toward human (secular and church) government.

Paul and Patriotism

The Apostle Paul provides a very interesting study for reflection in regards to patriotism. Paul is definitely a Jew's Jew. We sense Paul's pride in his Jewish roots in Philippians 3:5-6, "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless." Upon his conversion there is a radical re-orientation of his national identity that he refers to as "garbage" (literally, "manure," "dung," or "human excrement" in Philippians 3:9).

Regarding his love for Israel, Paul elaborates in Romans 9-11 as he shares his love for his nation Israel and her role in the divine plan for history. While Paul appeals for individuals to belief (Romans 10:1), there is much more at work in this section. Some interpretations (and denominations) want to ignore the clearly national implications based on their eschatological persuasions. But as a pre-millennialist, I see Paul's great love not only for Israel as lost people, but his belief that one future day, Jews will turn in belief (repentance) toward the One with pierced hands

(Zechariah 12:10 – 13:9) and that implies a nation, a landed people with a functioning government under YHWH in their promised land and as the pre-eminent nation that leads all others in worship of the One true God and in faith and obedience to Jesus.

Paul was also a Roman citizen. He appeals to his citizenship in Acts 16:37-39, 21:24-29 and 25:10-11. In Romans 13:1-7, Paul gives guidance to believers (Roman citizens and non-citizens) on their responsibilities to human governments. While never advocating for absolute submission to human government, he does call on "all" – including Christ followers to "be subject" to the governing authorities ... "as a matter of conscience."

It is interesting that one of Paul's strongest admonitions for specific prayer is found in 1 Timothy 2:1-4. In his commentary on this passage, Dr. Homer Kent, Jr., stated what seems obvious in the text but is for the most part absent from our highly scripted worship gatherings today.

Paul singled out one group which should receive mention in our public prayers. These are the rulers, those who possess the greatest temporal power for good or evil ... These were the days of the infamous Nero. Christians were not wholeheartedly protected by the administrators in most areas ... The Christian writers of the second and third centuries inform us that prayer for rulers always formed a

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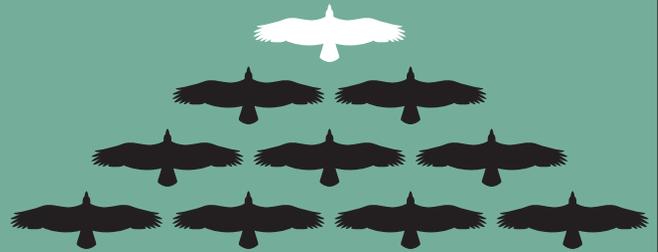
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HOW CAN WE LOVE GOD WHOM WE CAN'T SEE IF WE DON'T LOVE HUMANS THAT WE CAN SEE?



*part of the Christian gatherings.²
[author's emphasis]*

Loving as Evidence of Loving the Unseen God

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. (1 John 4:19-20 NIV)

Most commentators agree that John establishes some sort of litmus test. To borrow from cartoon character Linus's famous words, "I love mankind, it's people I can't stand." But there is a deep biblical truth here. How can we love God whom we can't see if we don't love humans that we can see?

While not stated, it is a reasonable extension that John would have said something to the effect that "your love of the invisible God is a sham if you don't love those He loved and for whom He gave his one and only Son." By extension, how can we love a heavenly country/city that we can't see if we don't love an earthly country/city that we can see?

In the early fifth century A.D., Saint Augustine of Hippo seems to use this line of argument in his writings. In his Letter 91 (408/409 A.D.) to Nectarius, Augustine appeals to Nectarius's patriotism and commends Nectarius's love and devotion to Rome as good and natural but insufficient and temporary.

I am not surprised that your heart still glows with such warm love for your hometown ... showing by your life and your behavior, that "a good man's service of his hometown has no limit or terminus." That is why we should love to count you too as a citizen of a certain country beyond; it is because we love that country with a holy love – as far as we can – that we accept hard work and danger among the people we hope to benefit by helping them reach it. If you were, you would consider there to be 'no limit or terminus' to the service of the small group of its citizens who are pilgrims on this earth; and in discharging your duties to a much finer city [cf. Heb 11:16].³

In Letter 138 to Marcellinus (c. 411/412 A.D.), Augustine wrote,

God revealed in the wealth and fame of the Roman empire how powerful are civic virtues even without true religion; to make it clear that with the addition of this human beings become citizens of the other city, whose king is truth, whose law is love, and whose limit is eternity.⁴

Even under Roman rule, Augustine argued that love for one's homeland, i.e. patriotism, as an analogy that our love with right actions for true good for our earthly country (patriotism)

should train us to love our heavenly country that awaits us as believers and followers of Christ. Is it then not reasonable that part of our training in spiritual affections include a genuine affection for the land of our human birth, or adopted nationality as is the case of some?

During my years as a chaplain, I was always also assigned to be part of a pastoral team for Protestant services at a military chapel. As an evangelical, I was introduced to some liturgical practices uncommon to services often found in Charis Fellowship congregations. One of these included the singing the Doxology each week after the offering. In one chapel in particular, we sang both the Doxology and the fourth verse of "My Country 'Tis of Thee." At first I thought it odd, but upon reflection, I found it to be a sober and important reminder of our responsibility as believers in Jesus Christ.

*"Our fathers' God to Thee,
Author of liberty, to Thee we sing.
Long may our land be bright,
With freedom's holy light,
Protect us by Thy might,
Great God our King!"*

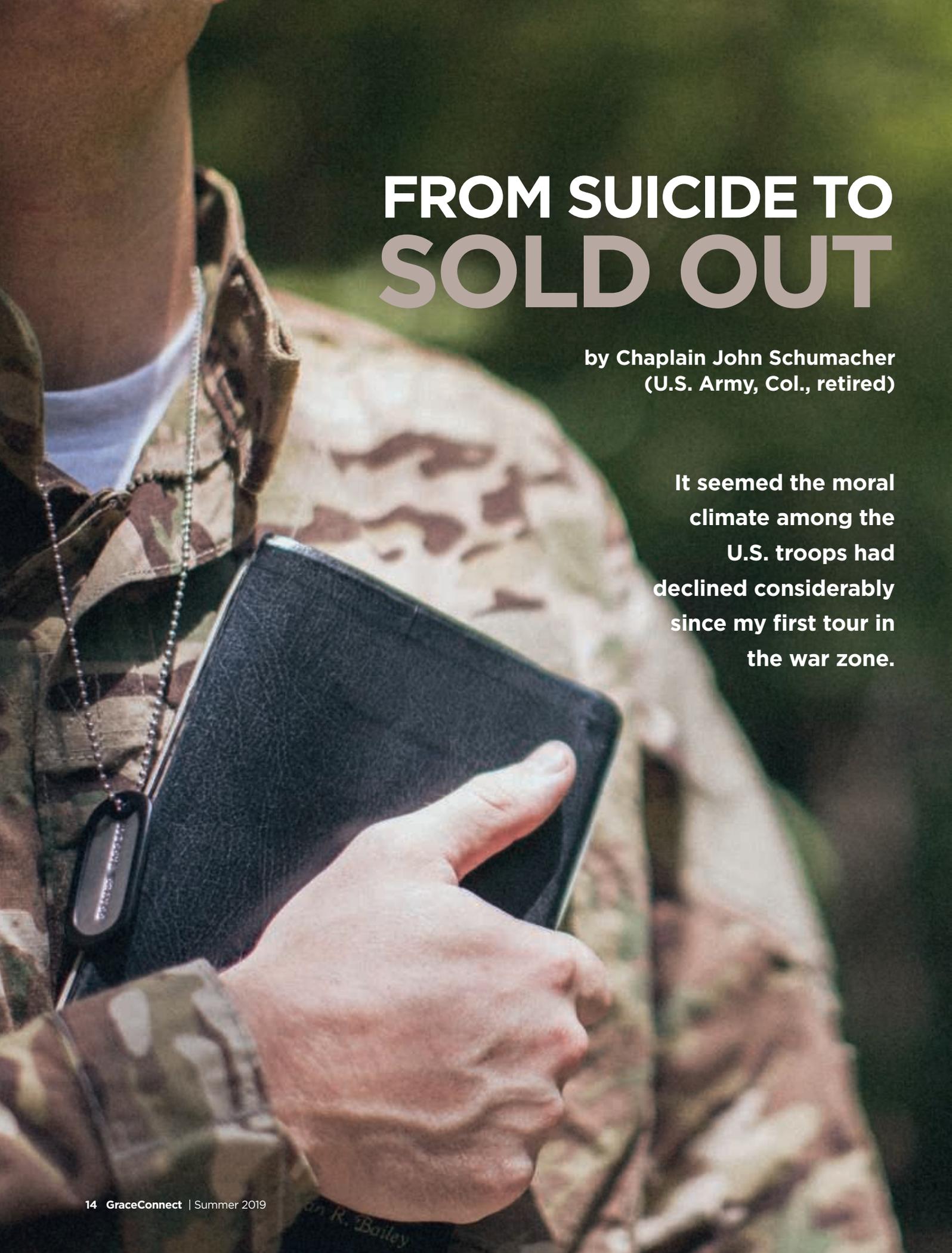
My prayer is "May God help us to use the natural love and biblically informed love for our country to rightly direct our love and actions for His kingdom."

Mark Penfold is the endorsing agent for the Charis Fellowship. In 2017, he retired after 30 years as a Charis Fellowship chaplain in the U.S. Army.

² Dr. Homer A. Kent, Jr. *The Pastoral Epistles*, Rev. Ed. Chicago, Moody Press, 1982. Pg.97.

³ E.M. Atkins and R.J. Dodaro, eds. *Augustine's Political Writings*. Cambridge, U.K. Cambridge University Press. 2004. Pg. 1.

⁴ Adkins and Dodaro, eds. *Augustine's Political Writings*. Pg. 41.



FROM SUICIDE TO SOLD OUT

by Chaplain John Schumacher
(U.S. Army, Col., retired)

It seemed the moral
climate among the
U.S. troops had
declined considerably
since my first tour in
the war zone.

I GAVE HIM A NEW TESTAMENT AND CHALLENGED HIM TO READ THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, AND IF HE FELT LIKE TALKING AFTER HE READ IT TO COME BACK AND TALK AGAIN.



S ometime between 1969 and 1970, during my second tour in Vietnam, I met a man who tried to commit suicide at my post in Kontum, located in the northern part of South Vietnam. My ministry was to care for the American military advisors to the Vietnamese forces in the entire province, the largest province in South Vietnam and close to the DMZ between the north and south sections of the country. I regularly traveled in a quite dangerous country. We also had our support troops at the Kontum U.S. military base.

It seemed the moral climate among the U.S. troops had declined considerably since my first tour in the war zone. Drug abuse was more prevalent, and one of the soldiers in my camp was a particularly notorious “junkie.” His name was Dave (not his real name).

My camp doctor was a committed Christian and we were close friends. One Sunday, I noticed he was not in my chapel service, which he usually attended. As the service ended and I was leaving our small chapel on the compound, I met him on the sidewalk as he was walking toward the chapel. He said, “John, Dave is in the dispensary. I don’t think I can help him, but I think you can. He tried to commit suicide, but he is stabilized now.”

I went to the dispensary to find Dave. He was on a cot and awake. I put my hand on his shoulder and told him I was the chaplain and had

come to see him. Dave’s response, in a “yelling” fashion, was, “Pray for me! I don’t even care what you say. Just pray for me.”

“Dave, just calm down and I will,” I responded. He did, and I prayed.

Before I left, I told him he needed to come and see me when/if he wanted to talk.

The next morning, looking like anything but a soldier, I invited him in.

He was extremely angry, and, in my heart, I thought, “This is going to go nowhere quickly.” He argued intensely with everything I tried to share.

Finally, I told him, “Dave, your argument is not with me; it is with the Lord and the message of hope in the Word of God.”

I gave him a New Testament and challenged him to read the Gospel of John, and if he felt like talking after he read it to come back and talk again.

The very next morning, he knocked on my office screen door. He looked transformed.

I told him, “Something has happened, and I think I know what it is, but I want you to come in and tell me about it.”

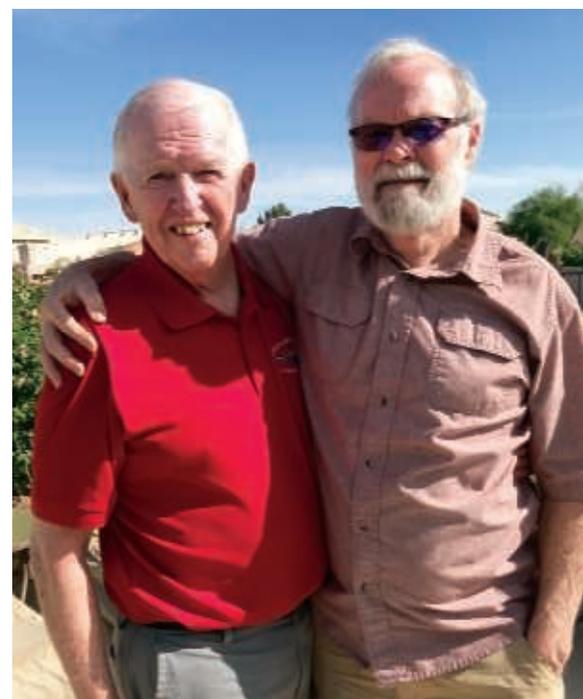
It was a powerful, precious moment. He said, “I did what you told me and, when I read the words of Thomas, ‘My Lord and my God,’ I fell on my knees and gave my heart to Jesus.”

That was approximately 50 years ago.

Recently, I had dinner with him and his wife. After 50 years he remains radiant and a “sold out” servant of the Lord. We have communicated off and on for all of those years, and he has remained radiant in his faith. As we parted, we hugged, and he thanked me again for what happened in Vietnam.

Through the years, again and again, I have thought that this experience made it worth all I went through to serve as an Army chaplain (two times) in the war zone.

In 2017, John Schumacher stepped down after 22 years as the endorsing agent for the Charis Fellowship. Previously, he served for 30 years as a Charis Fellowship chaplain in the U.S. Army.



Nearly 50 years later, Chaplain Schumacher, left, catches up with his friend, Dave.



PATRIOTISM OR NATIONALISM?

by Jesse Deloe

It is helpful to distinguish between patriotism and nationalism. Patriotism can be defined simply as love of country. Nationalism, on the other hand, takes that love of country and expands it to mean love of country at the expense of other nations.

CAN YOU BE LOYAL OR DEVOTED TO BOTH THE NATION WHERE YOU LIVE AND TO ANOTHER COUNTRY AT THE SAME TIME?



If you were a Christian in Communist China or Nazi Germany on a national holiday (and had the freedom to meet), what might be different from a worship service in the United States on the Fourth of July? Would you be pledging allegiance to the Communist or Nazi flag or singing that country's national anthem along with other hymns of the faith, like "Faith of Our Fathers" with words appropriate to the histories of those nations?

"Back in the day," children who attended vacation Bible school often began the day pledging allegiance to the American and Christian flags, and to the Bible. Remember?

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag and to the Savior for whose Kingdom it stands, one Savior, crucified, risen, and coming again, with life and liberty for all who believe.

I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word, I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path and will hide its words in my heart that I might not sin against God.

Can you be loyal or devoted to both the nation where you live and to another country at the same time? I have friends who have dual

citizenships in both the USA and Canada. Another family claims citizenship in both the USA and Ireland. The Apostle Paul writes that followers of Jesus are citizens of a heavenly kingdom (Philippians 3:20). Peter says we are "aliens" (KJV), "temporary residents and foreigners" here on earth (1 Pet 2:11, NLT).

Like so many other things in life, it's often not a matter of "either or," but of "both and." It's a question of priorities. Sometimes, the lines are difficult to draw, and that's when spiritual discernment is so critical.

When it comes to patriotism, loyalty, and priorities, the Bible makes it clear that the Christian is to live under the authority of the governments God has established (Romans 13:1-2). Paul teaches that we have a responsibility to the government (vv. 5-6)—even meeting the dreaded April 15 tax obligation.

It is helpful to distinguish between patriotism and nationalism.

Patriotism can be defined simply as love of country. It's the kind of love that makes you stop and place your hand over your heart when you hear the national anthem, or, if you're British, equally as proud whenever you hear "God Save the Queen." Nationalism, on the other hand, takes that love of country and expands it to mean love of country at the expense of other nations.¹

¹ Ryan Hamm. *Patriotism and Christianity, What is the difference between patriotism and nationalism?* Christianity Today/ChristianBibleStudies.com.

The Brethren movement, dating back to the 18th century, includes varying views of loyalty to governments. One of the key issues for many years was whether or not to "bear arms" in defense of one's country.

On my 18th birthday, I had to register with the selective service office to determine my eligibility for the draft, even though they were not drafting at the time. Because I was pre-registered in seminary, intending to enter the ministry, I was classified as 4-D, meaning that military service for me was deferred, pending the satisfactory completing of my ministry studies.

Even today, although military service is entirely voluntary in the U.S., young men between the ages of 18 and 26 must register. Should the draft be reinstated, men who have moral or religious convictions against using weapons may register as a Conscientious Objector (CO). If he is opposed to any form of military service, he will be assigned to alternative service. Such service will be in areas of maintenance of the national health, safety, and interest, or might involve working with a religious mission. The person whose beliefs allow him to serve in the military but in a noncombatant capacity can serve in the Armed Forces but will not be assigned training or duties that include using weapons.

As someone raised in the Brethren Church, I was taught about non-resistance, which allowed for either



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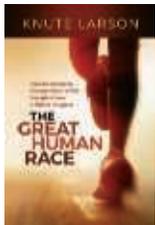
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for CO status or noncombatant status in the military. It was a surprise, then, when World War II broke out, for a young Brethren boy like me, to learn that some young men from my church were going to war, fully equipped and trained to use weapons to kill.

Convictions changed in the Fellowship and the “doctrine” of non-resistance was discarded, not by legislative action, but by practice. The 1969 Statement of Faith of the FGBC, regarding the “Christian Life,” included the clause “not engaging in carnal strife but showing a Christlike attitude toward all men.” Carnal strife was thought by many to denote war, but it likely has a broader connotation to include any physical or “worldly” attempts to settle differences, perhaps even such things as violent labor strikes.

The “Commitment to Common Identity,” which is the current position of the Charis Fellowship, includes no similar statement. So, it can likely be said that convictions regarding military service are the province of the local church and/or the individual Christian. It should be noted that this position has not been arrived at lightly or without careful study of the Scripture.

We are not often faced with such drastic decisions as to whether to go to war or not, so, perhaps we should consider the more subtle issues of

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loyalty and devotion. We sometimes sing about patriotic loyalty in hymns like “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” with the lyrics, “Our fathers’ God, to thee, author of liberty, to thee we sing.”

Author Stephen Mattson suggests some helpful views on this issue.

While it’s clearly possible to be both an American and a Christian, we must realize that the goals of our country’s government and those of Christ often directly contradict each other... Unfortunately, Christians have been historically gullible to nationalistic “Christianity,” and often treat their faith as a civic religion where they can establish a voting bloc and create enough influence to legislate laws, gain wealth, and consolidate power rather than sacrificially serve and love others.

Separating king and country is difficult for modern American Christians to comprehend because we incorporate nationalism and patriotism into much of our religion and faith. It’s not uncommon for churches to celebrate the 4th of July, honor military personnel and veterans, adorn flags in their sanctuaries, and incorporate America into songs of worship. But for the very first followers of Jesus, these types of ideals and symbols would be alarming and even considered blasphemous.

A faith hindered by patriotism is highly selective and irrationally

loyal according to partisan opinions.²

Most Christians in America today are likely grateful to be living in a country where they can exercise their religious freedoms more freely than they could in many parts of the world. It appears that some of these liberties are under attack by the strongly secular and even atheistic voices becoming more and more vocal and demanding. How should we react if our religious freedoms are curtailed or even taken from us?

If the largely tax-free consideration for religious institutions were to be rescinded, would we make the necessary sacrifices to fund their ministries? If we were told we couldn’t hold Bible studies on public property or even in our homes because of residential restrictions, would we resist the laws and even protest and disobey?

What will happen when government demands which are contrary to the will of God become law? The Scriptures make it clear how we should respond in such a situation. Peter and other apostles tell us, “We must obey God rather than any human authority” (Acts 5:29). In other words, our priority (allegiance) is to God. We are loyal to God when we obey the laws and demands of those in authority over us so long

as they are not contrary to our spiritually determined conscience.

When civil disobedience is demanded by the rare circumstance of choosing between the civil law and the will of God, Christians must protest. But, in doing so, they must maintain the principles of conduct that are to characterize their lives. For example, they must avoid violence, whether verbal or physical. And, if law-breaking is necessary, Christians must be willing to accept the consequences of their actions.

The disciples counted it a privilege to suffer for their faith in similar circumstances. “Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” (Acts 5:41). What’s more, the Apostle Paul testified, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18).

Can we emulate these early Christians? We are grateful for what we enjoy as residents of our country and living as loyal citizens. But we should be even more thankful that our eternal citizenship is in heaven where we are already “seated... with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6).

Jesse Deloe is a retired pastor in the Charis Fellowship who most recently served on the editorial staff of BMH Books.

² Stephen Mattson, *When Patriotism Becomes Idolatry*, Huffington Post, November 20, 2017.

BROKEN PATRIOT

by Chaplain Justin Hayes
(U.S. Navy, Lieutenant)

**As I got to know him,
I discovered that the
stain was no birth
mark, but was a battle
scar from his active
duty service.**

When I first met “Stephen,” I noticed that he had an interesting “birth mark” on his nose and that he walked with a limp. As I got to know him, I discovered that the stain was no birth mark, but was a battle scar from his active duty service. Stephen was a Korean War vet who served in the United States Marine Corps, first as an enlisted Marine and eventually as an officer.

Stephen would attend worship services at a chapel where I served, and I would often wonder where his mind would drift to as he stared out through the stained glass windows on Sunday mornings. (His mind was obviously not thinking about whatever soliloquy I was delivering from the pulpit.)

I imagined his thoughts drifting to his time in Korea where he first earned his stripes as a PFC. At the very beginning of his career he received the physical marks that would daily remind him of the cost of patriotism. His march through the Chosin Reservoir earned him a membership with “the Frozen Chosin” as well as frostbite injuries that permanently marked his nose, and injured his legs. Yet he continued to serve in a community where physical fitness and warrior toughness are standard issue. Many others would have thrown in the towel having sustained the injuries that caused him to struggle daily.

Stephen was not only a premier patriot, but also a leader in his piety. As a chaplain I have encountered commanders with varying degrees of spiritual commitment and what speaks most to me is to see a commander worship with his or her troops. In a military culture, the commander sets the example for everyone under his or her authority. They set the example in their speech, in their behavior, and in their spiritual practice.

When a commander shows up for worship, a religious service can fill up because the rest of the troops take their cue from the senior officer. Stephen was committed to attending every divine worship service that was available. It did not matter if his chaplain couldn't preach himself out of a paper bag, Stephen still showed up.

In peacetime, piety is a taboo subject, but in war, faith's stage is front and center. Stephen led from the front whether in peace or in war as an example of spiritual devotion for his troops.

Stephen's story is the epitome of faith in action. He was a broken pious patriot who did not let his handicaps hold him back from serving God and country with all that he had. Stephen poured himself out for faith, comrades, and complete strangers, and that inspires me.