

2 SAMUEL 1:17-27

ON THE DEATH OF HEROES

“Your glory, O Israel, is slain on your high places!
How the mighty have fallen!
Tell it not in Gath,
publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon,
lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.

“You mountains of Gilboa,
let there be no dew or rain upon you,
nor fields of offerings!
For there the shield of the mighty was defiled,
the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.

“From the blood of the slain,
from the fat of the mighty,
the bow of Jonathan turned not back,
and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

“Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely!
In life and in death they were not divided;
they were swifter than eagles;
they were stronger than lions.

“You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet,
who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.

‘How the mighty have fallen
in the midst of the battle!

‘Jonathan lies slain on your high places.
I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
very pleasant have you been to me;
your love to me was extraordinary,
surpassing the love of women.

“How the mighty have fallen,
and the weapons of war perished!”¹

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The old king was brave, of that there was no doubt. He had fought the nation's wars, leading his army against the enemies of the state in multiple campaigns. He was not perfect; however, he was God's anointed to lead the nation. He had not obeyed God perfectly. He had deliberately sinned on multiple occasions. The sins were not significant in the eyes of many, even in the eyes of many among the churches in this day. Nevertheless, his sins were egregious and displeasing before the Living God.

His bravery was displayed in this final battle. To demonstrate the reality of this statement, it is necessary to go back a bit and examine the events preceding the last battle. Saul had become obsessed with killing David. His rage was inspired primarily by the knowledge that God had removed divine blessing from the king, anointing David in his place. Though David had served Saul loyally, leading the army and valiantly defending the nation, Saul was quite unwilling to share any glory with the younger man. And David was idolised by the people.

Returning from battle against the Philistines, "the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. And the women sang to one another as they celebrated,

‘Saul has struck down his thousands,
and David his ten thousands.’

[1 SAMUEL 18:6, 7]

Instead of rejoicing in victory, Saul brooded over what was being sung. The divine text states, "Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, 'They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?'" Then, the divine account concludes darkly, "And Saul eyed David from that day on" [1 SAMUEL 18:8, 9].

From this point forward, Saul would make multiple attempts to kill David, even pursuing him into the Judean desert and hounding him until he was forced out of the land. And though he would confess on several occasions that David was righteous and that he—Saul—was in error, like an enraged pit bull he would return to his unrelenting, mindless effort to kill the younger man. His hatred of the one whom the LORD had chosen was so intense that he even ordered the slaughter of the priests of God because he believed they favoured David. Rather than inspiring his people, his rage actually drove loyal servants to the man whom the king hated.

Among those driven to support David was a favoured son of the King. Jonathan was as brave as either Saul or David. On one occasion, Jonathan and his armour bearer had initiated a battle against the Philistines. This was at a time that Saul's army was cowering in caves and among mountain defiles. The battle Jonathan initiated panicked the Philistines, causing them to flee in disarray. Saul was informed that the Philistines were fleeing and no one was pursuing. He attempted to obtain guidance, but the rout was so complete and so rapid that he felt forced to act hastily—perhaps too hastily.

Saul put the army under strict orders that no one was to eat anything until the Philistines were completely driven from the field. The Word of God informs the reader, "Saul had laid an oath on the people, saying, 'Cursed be the man who eats food until it is evening and I am avenged on my enemies.'" So none of the people had tasted food" [1 SAMUEL 18:8, 9]. However, Jonathan hadn't received the message—he was busy fighting Saul's battle! Jonathan was chasing the fleeing Philistine army, ensuring that they didn't turn and fight again.

As he chased the Philistines through the forest, Jonathan saw some honey on the ground. He put the tip of his staff in the honeycomb and refreshed himself with some of the sweet honey. Observing him eat, one of the people remonstrated with him that the king had commanded that no one was to eat anything until the Philistines were completely vanquished. His command was emphasised with a curse! And now Jonathan had violated the king's command.

After the battle, Saul sought though he was unable to receive guidance from the Lord. He was convinced that someone had violated his command. Enquiring of the Lord who might have disobeyed his command, he discovered that Jonathan had eaten some honey. He demanded that Jonathan tell him what he had done. Jonathan bravely replied, "I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am; I will die" [1 SAMUEL 14:43]. The people gathered around at that time, protesting Saul's rash dictum, saying, "Shall Jonathan die, who has who has worked this great salvation in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day" [1 SAMUEL 14:45]. The point of relating this incident is to demonstrate Jonathan's courage.

Jonathan was a warrior, without question. However, he was perspicacious as well. When he first met David, we read, "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" [1 SAMUEL 18:1]. Again, we read that "Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul" [1 SAMUEL 18:3]. Thus, from the time that Saul determined to kill David, Jonathan was determined to spare David. Throughout all Saul's mad efforts to destroy David, Jonathan continued his loyalty to the younger man.

Jonathan and David had made a covenant. The account of that covenant reads thusly, "Jonathan said to David, The LORD, the God of Israel, be witness! When I have sounded out my father, about this time tomorrow, or the third day, behold, if he is well disposed toward David, shall I not then send and disclose it to you? But should it please my father to do you harm, the LORD do so to Jonathan and more also if I do not disclose it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. May the LORD be with you, as he has been with my father. If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the LORD, that I may not die; and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever, when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.' And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, 'May the LORD take vengeance on David's enemies.' And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul" [1 SAMUEL 20:12-17].

David did flee from Saul; and Saul did pursue him. David would see Jonathan only one more time after he fled the presence of the king. The account is brief, but significant; it reveals Jonathan's sensitivity to the work of God. "Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said to him, 'Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this.' And the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home" [1 SAMUEL 23:16-18]. In this brief account, we witness the sensitivity to God's Spirit that guided Jonathan. He knew that his father had proven himself unworthy of the kingship, and that God had anointed David to lead the people of Israel. Jonathan declared his loyalty to the younger man that day.

Though the king of Israel would continue to hound David, and though David would be betrayed by the very people over whom God had made him king, through every danger and trial, God was with the younger man. Finally, David was forced to flee from the land and into the stronghold of the enemy. From the time he had first begun to serve Saul, David could say with conviction, "There is but a step between me and death" [1 SAMUEL 20:3].

Then came the final episode in Saul's life. The Philistines again gathered to battle with Israel. Their troops assembled opposite the army of Israel. There is a disturbing aspect introduced, however; the Word of God informs us that "When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly" [1 SAMUEL 28:5]. Knowing his dependence on the Lord, Saul attempted to obtain guidance—he inquired of the LORD. But there was no answer. No dreams, the priests were silenced and there was no word from a prophet.

In desperation, Saul sought out a witch—a medium, a necromancer to see if she could bring up Samuel from the dead. He had ordered that mediums and necromancers were to be killed. In fact, it was thought that all those who dabbled in the dark arts had been slain. Do you not find it surprising that when Saul asked whether a witch could be found in the land that his servants knew of such a medium living at En-dor? Does it not say something of the character of his courtiers that they would be aware of such a person?

Saul, accompanied by two of his servants, came to the woman at night. Perhaps coming at night was necessitated by the proximity of the enemy; however, it seems that communicating with those who live in darkness through a séance takes place in darkness. At first, the medium responded cautiously to Saul's request. However, when she demurred, Saul invoked the LORD; and his oath was sufficient to allay her fears. When Saul asked her to bring up Samuel, she performed her dark arts, imagining, it would appear, that she would cause some strange spectre to appear that would qualify as Samuel. However, the divine account indicates that she was genuinely startled and even frightened by what happened next.

We read, "When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman said to Saul, 'Why have you deceived me? You are Saul'" [1 SAMUEL 28:12]. Something in the appearance of the apparition she saw was too real—it was not the faux phantoms such as she had described, and perhaps even witnessed, in the past. Saul assured her that he meant her no harm and asked her to describe what she saw. What is important is that Saul appears not to have seen at this time what she saw. However, when she replied, "I see a god coming up out of the earth," Saul asked, "What is his appearance?" The woman replied, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe." Listen to the divine text: "And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage" [1 SAMUEL 28:13, 14].

There are more questions than answers at this point in the narrative. What seems apparent is that God did allow Samuel to rise from the dead. The woman saw "a god," *Elohim*, rising from the ground. There was an otherworldly quality about the one arising from the netherworld that she saw. Her description convinced Saul that she had indeed called Samuel forth from the dead.

Saul prostrated himself on the ground and the following exchange took place. "Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?' Saul answered, 'I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do.' And Samuel said, 'Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy? The LORD has done to you as he spoke by me, for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day. Moreover, the LORD will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. The LORD will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines'" [1 SAMUEL 28:15-19].

Saul was terrified, as well he should have been. He had just heard his own death sentence announced from beyond this life. The Bible uses powerful language. We are informed that He was “filled with fear because of the words of Samuel. And there was no strength in him” [1 SAMUEL 28:20]. Again, the Word notes that “he was terrified” [1 SAMUEL 28:21]. At the insistence of the medium and the two men who accompanied him, Saul ate a meal that the medium provided, after which the entourage left to return to the encampment before morning.

The battle was joined, and as Samuel had warned, Saul did indeed die. His sons that were in the battle with him also died; this included Jonathan. This is the account of Saul’s death. “Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, and the Philistines struck down Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul. The battle pressed hard against Saul, and the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by the archers. Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, ‘Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and mistreat me.’ But his armor-bearer would not, for he feared greatly. Therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. Thus Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, on the same day together. And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley and those beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and fled. And the Philistines came and lived in them.

“The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. So they cut off his head and stripped off his armor and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines, to carry the good news to the house of their idols and to the people. They put his armor in the temple of Ashtaroath, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan. But when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, all the valiant men arose and went all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted seven days” [1 SAMUEL 31:1-13].

What is evident is that Saul died an ignoble death—he took his own life because he feared falling alive into the hands of a vicious enemy. He had been wounded in battle and realised that he was losing strength. Thus, he pleaded with his armour bearer to kill him. When the armour bearer refused, Saul thrust his own sword into his body, likely piercing his heart to ensure a quick death. The abuse of the bodies of Saul and his sons lends credence to his fear of abuse at the hands of the Philistines.

Three days after the battle, David received word from a survivor of the conflict. A man came into David’s presence, claiming to have news of the battle. He gave an account of the battle, including the news that Saul and his son Jonathan were dead. Stunned by the account the man had delivered, David probed, “How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead” [2 SAMUEL 1:5]. The man then related a tale that inflated his own importance, imagining that taking credit for killing Saul would gain David’s approval. The man had Saul’s crown and armlet, lending credence to his account. However, in light of the divine account we just read, it seems apparent that the man imagined he would gain approval for delivering David from his enemy. Of course, the response of David was not at all what this son of an Amalekite expected. David ordered his death; the man died because of the tale he concocted.

TWO WORLDS — That’s quite an introduction! I did want to ensure that we were all on the same page. We’ve witnessed in a cursory fashion the manner in which three lives intertwined—David, Jonathan and Saul. Saul was threatened by the younger man and sought to rid himself of what he perceived as a threat. He was willing to ignore affairs of state in order to gain what he saw as his necessary ends. Jonathan was loyal to his father and honourable toward the young king. In the truest sense of the word, Jonathan brought honour to an otherwise dishonourable lineage. David was a survivor who refused to defend himself, trusting that God was just.

There are some lessons that can be drawn from this account of the history of the first two kings of Israel—lessons that are germane to our own observance of Remembrance Day. The first lesson is that each Christian lives in two worlds—the physical world and the eternal world. We are Canadians. As such, we have an obligation to be loyal to the nation, obedient to the laws and showing honour to those who govern and direct the affairs of daily life. We are to be good citizens, participating in the political process and praying for those who govern.

I fear that we who call ourselves Evangelicals do not pay nearly enough attention to those passages that bear on our responsibility as citizens. We must remember passages such as this: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed” [ROMANS 13:1-7].

Or again, we must take care to observe the words Paul wrote to Timothy. “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” [1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4].

We must balance this responsibility toward civil government with our responsibility before the Lord God. We are guided by the declaration of the Apostles when they had been haled before the Sanhedrin; “We must obey God rather than men” [ACTS 5:29]. This is but a succinct summation of an earlier affirmation Peter and John delivered to those same men. “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard” [ACTS 4:19, 20].

We Christians must ensure that we know the will of God and then act boldly to do all that God commands, leaving judgement of our cause to Him who judges justly. Our obligation is to do what is right, not what is convenient. This describes our situation in the physical world. For time, we are Canadians. We thank God for this privilege, believing that He has shown us mercy and grace in permitting us to live here and to share in the blessings of citizenship. We have a rich heritage that flows out of the shared Faith of our forefathers—a Faith that reflects confidence that Jesus Christ is Lord and that we are responsible to Him to live in such a manner that He is honoured. Even though some have not believed this truth, our culture nevertheless reflects the spiritual underpinnings that grew out of this common Faith.

However, Christians must never forget that this present life is not our eternal destiny. Recall the words Paul penned to the Christians in Philippi and apply those words to your life. “Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

“Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved” [**PHILIPPIANS 3:17-4:1**].

Mark the statement that declares “our citizenship is in heaven.” This is the true situation for the believer in Christ the Lord. Though many who profess the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ live as though this world is their home, we who know the Master are confident that we owe allegiance to the True and Living God. We are not like a man who declared to me that he was “Chairman of the Church.” At a time of congregational crisis he asserted, “We are Canadians. We have a constitution. Where the Bible is in conflict with our constitution, we must obey the constitution!” Such an individual is unfit for Christian service, much less to be called Christian.

What is tragic about such an attitude is that it is more common than we dare imagine. Though few will openly argue in such a manner, too many live as though it was biblical truth. This life is the anteroom to Heaven; we Christians realise that we are here for a brief moment. Therefore, we live in the knowledge of eternity with the light of Heaven always shining on us. Can we truly understand the meaning of the Apostle’s words recorded in the Ephesian Letter? “Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called ‘the uncircumcision’ by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” [**EPHESIANS 2:11-22**].

The reason for saying these things, making this distinction between earth and Heaven is that we Christians do live in two worlds. As we saw a short time ago, we are commanded to “Pay to all what is owed to them ... respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed” [**ROMANS 13:7**]. Assuredly, we honour those saints worthy of honour. This is not an impossible rule, but it is difficult. The better we know an individual, the more likely we are to witness their flaws. Someone has said quite well, “The people you lead will always applaud you a little less than those who know you less well.”²

² Carey Nieuwhof, “3 Battles Every Leader Loses ... Every Time,” Church Leaders, <http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/176898-carey-nieuwhof-battles-every-leader-loses-every->

We memorialise our fellow believers when they are called from this life, not because we grieve, but because we rejoice that their battles are finished. We rejoice in the knowledge that they have gained the eternal rest and are now in the presence of the Risen Lord of Glory. We have these promises that assure us of what is yet to be revealed in us. Remember God's promise. "We know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

"So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" [2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-8].

"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words" [1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18].

Nor may we forget the final triumphant shout from the Apostle. "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" [2 TIMOTHY 4:6-8]. The death of a Christian is a moment of victory. The race is finished and the crown is awarded.

Thus, we Christians have coronation ceremonies for those of our number when they are released from this life. However, we must never forget that we are dwelling for the moment in this broken world. We esteem characteristics that once were valued throughout our society. Those characteristics that we value most are still valued and expected in certain vocations chosen for the benefit of others. We esteem courage, honour and commitment. We expect of those who serve our nation integrity, honesty, professionalism, compassion, respect and accountability to the nation. We expect and often witness such values in the soldiers, sailors and airmen who wear the uniform of the respective services. We look for and esteem such values in the men and women who wear red serge and Stetson hats as members of the RCMP.

As citizens, we grieve for men such as *Corporal Nathan Cirillo*, both because of the cowardly attack that led to his death, but also because it represented an attack on the sanctity of the nation. We grieve for *Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent*, struck down by a craven fanatic in the name of his god. Such an attack shocks because it is an attack against the entire nation. When *Constables Dave Ross, Fabrice Georges Gevaudan* and *Douglas James Larche* were shot and killed, and *Constables Darlene Goguen* and *Eric Dubois* wounded in New Brunswick this past June, the nation was shocked because it was seen as an attack on all Canadians.

We build memorials to those who were slain while serving our nation. The Mayerthorpe memorial to *Anthony Gordon, Lionide Johnston, Brock Myrol* and *Peter Schiermann* is appropriate because we still esteem courage, honour and commitment and ascribe these charter traits to our national police force. Every prairie town has a cenotaph commemorating the sacrifice of those who died in service to our nation. Such memorials are appropriate in light of the command of Scripture to give honour to those to whom honour is owed. It is right and appropriate that the Highway of Heroes should be so named as it is the road along which the men and women who were killed while serving our nation in Afghanistan made their final journey home. Thus, we memorialise their courage, their honour and their commitment.

We know that not all died bravely. We know that not all were consistent in acting courageously, honourably or in maintaining commitments. However, we know that they did manifest such character when they put on the uniform and acted to serve the interest of the country. Therefore, we honour them—we erect memorials to the sacrifice on our behalf. This is not some form of perverse hagiography; it is the simple act of honouring those from within the nation deserving of honour.

Saul did not always act honourably; but in the lament he composed, David chose to focus on the honourable acts of Israel's first king. And he grieved for Jonathan, his friend. It will give you greater appreciation for this friendship if you understand that Jonathan was much older than David. This was not the friendship of two teenagers who happened to have common interests; we witness a deep respect fostered by Jonathan's genuine admiration for David as a warrior and as a leader. Some biblical chronologists estimate the age difference between Jonathan and David was at least twenty-five years.

David honoured Saul because David's soul was larger than people might have otherwise assumed. He was less interested in personal gain than in showing proper respect for the LORD's anointed. David looked to God to fulfil the divine promise; it was not some man, and an enemy of the nation at that, who would enable God's servant to ascend to the throne. Mourning as he did, and memorialising Saul and Jonathan, David expresses in poetic form his confidence in the Sovereignty of God. God has acted as He chooses, and David accepts God's direction for his own life. God has been faithful; and David, also, must be faithful if he will please the Lord God.

Let me conclude the message by speaking of what appears obvious in my reading. David was the anointed of the Lord. Saul had served as the Lord's anointed, but he seems never to have understood just what that meant. He had seen his position as a means to power, never understanding that his position did confer power—power to serve and power to bless the people. David reveals that he clearly understands what it means to be the LORD's anointed. He refused to promote himself, choosing rather to trust in God and wait on Him to fulfil His Word. The opportunity to promote himself could never come at the expense of loss to God's people. David refused to play power politics, and Saul was all too willing to play that sordid game.

Power is inevitable in all groups, even churches. Power is not inherently evil; but the way power is used is often evil. At this point in his service before the LORD, David sees power as enablement to honour God and to build the people. The issues coming before him were not about him, but about how to honour God. Just so, the opportunity to honour the heroes of our own nation are not about seizing opportunity to advance an agenda, but about instructing all in how we may honour the Lord our God. This Remembrance Day provides opportunity for us to remember those who have served us, often in difficult and lonely places. The names that are scribed on cenotaphs and memorials represent the glory of our nation; they should be held in honour and esteem by all.

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It is inevitable that we will see others who serve give their lives so that we may be safe. Let us honour them. No greater honour can be rendered than to live truly as the people of God. When we live holy lives, walking honourably before the watching world, praying for those who lead us and who serve us, even as we speak the truth in love, we honour the sacrifice of our heroes.

In that vein, I ask these simple questions. You live in Canada, a great nation and a blessed nation. Do you give thanks to God for His mercy and for His kindness to you? Regardless of where you call home, can you say that your citizenship is in Heaven? Do you await from that heavenly home a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body? Do you live in anticipation of His return?

We have this great promise from God's Holy Word. Because Christ the Lord gave His life as a sacrifice for us, we are able to announce to all who are willing to receive the offer, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' believing in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be set free. It is with the heart that one believes and is made right with the Father; and it is with the mouth that one agrees with God and is set free." Paul concluded that promise with this citation first penned by the Prophet Joel, "Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be set free" [see **ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13**].

I pray you have that freedom today. May God bless our Remembrance Day. Amen.