**Thank You to the Veterans**

**Joshua 1:7-9 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is* with you wherever you go.”**

In Joshua 1, God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous, follow orders, stick to the plan, and don’t be afraid or dismayed. Veterans, this must sound familiar to you. It may have been said a different way, but this was in your training. When you were in a firefight, you reached back to your training and you refused to let fear overcome you and you followed through on your orders – and we are so thankful that you did.

In any conflict, a soldier must first know who the enemy is, then they must know what their duty is in the fight, and finally they must understand who their enemy isn’t. And so it is with Christians. We sing a song – Onward Christian Soldiers. We are in a battle. Anyone who doesn’t believe that has never studied their Bible and quite frankly is deceived. Who is our enemy? 1 Peter 5:8 says - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Our enemy is the devil. Isaiah 14:12 calls him Lucifer, son of the morning. Ephesians 6:12 says For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. So, we’ve established that we are in a battle – fiery darts are flying our way, as Ephesians 6:16 says - above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one – that’s Satan, Lucifer. 1 John 3:8 says in part The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. As followers of Jesus, we are part of this destruction and, I’ve got to tell you, Satan hates us for it.

So, we know who the enemy is, but, what is our duty in this battle? 2 Corinthian 5:20 says Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. 1 Timothy 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Matthew 10:7 says And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ How many remember a show called Mission Impossible? Just before the tape self destructed, the voice would say – Your mission, should you choose to accept it… Our duty, because we have chosen to accept it when we accepted Christ, is to spread the Gospel to every place darkness hides, helping to destroy the works of the devil. We are ambassadors, preachers, teachers, brothers, sisters in and of Christ. Our duty is to spread the Truth.

So we know who the enemy is, what our duty is – now we must understand who the enemy is not? The enemy is never our brothers and sisters in Christ. On the battlefield, a death caused by friendly forces is known as friendly fire. No Christian must die due to friendly fire. Our aim is always Satan and never our brothers and sisters. John 13:35 says “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” 1 Peter 3:8-9 says “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” Satan sends spirits into the unguarded heart – they’re named Criticism, Complaining, Pride, and Gossip – they manifest in words, or eye rolls, or unhealthy advice… they work to get those making a difference to quit… Satan hates a difference maker and it makes no difference to him whether that witness dies by his dart or by the dart of a friend.

As we seek to serve Christ, let’s remember who the enemy is; let’s march relentlessly until our duty is complete; let’s protect our brothers and sisters with love and forgiveness.

Remember to thank a veteran for their service this week.