

## Mark Davey – Decorated Soldier, Invisible Hero

This past Thursday night, our dear friend, Mark Davey, and fellow soldier for Christ, was transferred from time into eternity and is now face-to-face with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He fought the good fight on the battlefields of our nation's enemies and on the battlefields of the Invisible War. He is truly an American hero.

During five deployments in the Middle East, he led his soldiers into battle against the enemy. Their missions were to subdue the opposition by the use of the weapons of war. During each deployment, he and his men took the battle to the adversary and during five deployments each individual's personal engagement with the enemy was victorious. During those five deployments, Mark and his men went into Harm's Way and during all five of those deployments, only one man was classified as KIA: Killed in Action.

Biblically, we study the conflicts we all confront in the Devil's world. Yet, we claim the promises found in Scripture that the believer is protected by this promise in:

**Zechariah 2:5** 'For I,' declares the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire around Jerusalem, and I will be the glory in her midst.'

This means that the city of Jerusalem, which was not protected by walls, was protected by God's power and protection. This verse's message to Mark was, "You fight these battles and I will be your walls." Such was the case with Mark and his men during five deployments.

This promise is extended to those who live in the United States where the promise to study Scripture is protected by the first clause of the Constitution's First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

It was the promise in Zechariah 2:5 and the First Amendment's first clause that put this invisible "wall of fire" around Mark and his troops. How was this protection so efficient for Mark and his men, but not so for so many others in Harm's Way? Here is the answer.

Mark was a dedicated student of Scripture. He not only was consistent by his attendance at live Bible classes, but he also studied Scripture and its doctrines on a daily basis. When deployed, either in country or off at war, he always found time to study the Word.

On each of the five deployments in the Middle East and on the first night in Harm's Way, once his troops dug in at their base, he would call them together. This is my synopsis of what Mark said to them based on his conversations with me. He ended his comments with this remark:

“Every night I will not go to sleep without taking time to study my Bible. You are not required to do so. However, if you would like to join me, you are free to do so.”

Consistently, over five deployments, no one joined him on that first night. He never said another word about joining his study. Yet, over time one or two would show up, and then a few more, and finally, all the men would be with Mark in Bible study. His consistent message to his men was basically this: “We have guns to defend ourselves and we are professionals doing this. However, the enemy also has guns. What they do not have is a wall of fire. The Word of God and your positive volition to it will be your wall of fire.”

This group of men continued to gather every night, every week, every month, on and on until each deployment was over. Only one man was killed and that was not on a battlefield, but on the way to an Allied hospital.

What do we learn from the above? Mark Davey bought into the fact that “war is hell,” but that those who fight for a client nation are divinely supported to maintain that country's freedoms by the military expertise they deploy. In combat, on land, air, and sea, there are casualties, but inevitably the majority of those deployed return home although far too many find their new addresses at Arlington or at various military and private cemeteries scattered around the country and even sometimes at sea.

Among those who fought with Mark Davey, not one man was killed on the battlefield.

Yet, the intense demands on a person's soul during prolonged engagements in combat over numerous deployments can have a toll on a person's mind. Many people sustain the bodily wounds of war. Some recover, some have lasting injuries including loss of limbs, and some who have no physical injuries at all but continue to suffer mental ones. It is not normal to have a job whose major duty is to legally kill people. After one deployment a man can reenter society and most orient to normalcy, considering he has done his duty, and is able to move on. But there are some so are deployed more than once, for example, two times, some three times, some four times, and some even five times. Five times in harm's way, five times when not only his life was constantly threatened but also of those under his command.

When I learn that men and women are on active duty or are retired, I have a desire to thank them for their service to the country. I'm sure they hear such efforts as an expression of gratitude. But how often do those, such as myself, walk away feeling it was the least they could do, but not knowing the lasting impact, on body and soul of what those deployments required.

So, today, we memorialize a personal friend, a member of our congregation, a fellow citizen, a veteran of the United States Army. A man who was shot at and lived to tell the tale and did so during five deployments. A man who put his faith in the power of the Word of God as his most dependable armor in the scrum of hand-to-hand combat. He quietly led his men to sign on to and adopt the invisible power of the Word of God with its promise to maintain a wall of fire around them in the contest.

Among those men Mark led, where are those soldiers today? I personally know not a one. Yet I assert that to a man each and every one would stand in front of this pulpit and confirm that because of Mark Davey's leadership they were able to look square in the eyes of an armed enemy and by the power of the Word of God serving as his wall of fire, to win the contest.

All but one of these men survived the scrum of combat. The man who led them did so five times! The awards, decorations, and citations Mark received are so numerous that it would take several pages to cite them. Yet, their number simply reflects the kind of soldier, person, husband, father, brother, son, and patriot he was.

Here is a partial list of some of his decorations:

Bronze Star Medal with "V" device for valor (3 times)

Meritorious Service (3 times)

Army Commendation (5 times)

Army Achievement (11 times)

Army Good Conduct Award (6 times)

National Defense (2 times)

Afghanistan Campaign with two campaign stars (2 times)

Non-commissioned Officer Professional Deployment Ribbon (3 times)

Overseas Service Ribbon (4 times)

Among 9 others (1 time each)

A total of 40 awards in 18 categories.

In addition to all that, Mark had a wicked sense of humor and I thought I'd share with you excerpts from a letter he wrote to me dated December 11, 2010, almost 12 years ago, from Afghanistan:

Pastor G. I have to say I am overwhelmed with the support offered by the GDC Battalion. I have received countless e-mails, prayers, encouragement, and offerings from the warriors within. I should have enough mattress pads to share across the formation and enhance the living standard of our soldiers . My concern here is getting the boys out of their sack for the fight when needed. I am thinking about using the mattresses as a witnessing tool and only give it to those that accept Christ as Savior.

Q: “Who is your Savior? A: “Jesus.” “Here is your mattress pad.”

Q: “Who is your Savior?” A: “I don’t know.”

At this point I will “brain” them with a rusty old cot while yelling, “Back of the line, Loser!” I think I read something like that in the Bible.

Seriously, I am extremely grateful for the expressed love and kindness that all have given in all of the e-mails received. My plan is to write them back as time permits, but you know what the all-too-wise Mike Tyson once said, “Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face.”

We have been punched in the face. It is encouraging to the Soldiers to have like-minded warriors stateside personally emailing with thoughts and prayer on their behalf. There are so many accurate doctrinal points shared by soulfully sound believers - it breathes a motivation into the Bible class pushing us all forever forward to Heaven’s High Ground.

We continue to reconstruct and enhance our entry control points of the FOB as the enemy threat of suicide bombers increases daily. All too evident with a second attack on our sister BN at FOB Lightning where they killed two US soldiers and wounded 11 others. The Afghan Police show no interest in fortifying their own position, but since they are connected directly to our FOB we have taken the lead. You can build a castle but if the gate guards don’t know how to raise the drawbridge, the entire effort proves to be an exercise in futility.

Know that I will continue to pray for you all to the one true God— where all of our prayers are heard in the Throne Room. His glory so magnificent the angels must cover their eyes, through The Great Mediatory, our Lord, our Savior, the Lord of the Armies, Jesus Christ.

I love you all. Forever forward! Mark

This letter is just a sample of Mark’s personality. He was a funny guy but always professional when it came to leading his men. Well-placed humor breaks the stress when stress is the order of the day.

Mark’s family would like for everyone to know that over the long haul, Mark’s head injuries took their toll that resulted in a particular injury that ultimately led to his recent death. Here is their synopsis of Mark’s battle:

With this clear picture of who and what Mark did on the visible and invisible battlefields – how he clearly fought the good fight with honor in his capacities as a Scout Sniper, a leader of men in battle, and as a warrior for Christ for over 20 years of uniformed service, the family has asked me to share some important aspects of Mark's continued fight and his passing, because when Mark hung-up his uniform the day he retired from active duty, his battle was not over. And this part of the fight was far bigger than Mark Davey.

During his deployments, Mark was involved in multiple close-proximity explosions, not the least of which was when his armored vehicle was hit by an enemy improvised explosive device, or IED, and blown off a mountain pass. Although he and all his men miraculously walked away from that, even with no significant visible injuries, much later Mark would learn through these series of explosions he had sustained an invisible injury – something called a traumatic brain injury or TBI.

Very briefly and in layman's terms, a TBI is damage to one or more parts of the brain caused by violent blows to the head and can result in a combination of physical, sensory, cognitive, behavioral, or mental symptoms or impairments.

This neurological issue, in combination with what some warfighters refer to as normal wartime baggage, is called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. This can cause an ongoing battle with alcohol and multiple bouts with rehab. This continued to constitute the basis of Mark's ongoing battle beyond the visible battlefields he left over a decade ago. Through his battle, Mark wanted nothing more than to be well and to use his experiences and challenges as a platform to help other veterans. But, after years of love and help from his family, friends and professionals, the invisible war raged on and ultimately cost Mark his life. Clearly not in his right frame of mind, in unspeakable pain, last Thursday night, Mark took his own life.

Unfortunately, this tragic event is far bigger than Mark. There is an epidemic plaguing our nation's veterans to this very hour. If the national numbers are correct, on average, some 22 US veteran service members take their lives every day in this country.

Understand in Mark's case, we are talking about a man of great courage fueled by a deep well of doctrine in his soul, an honorable warfighter who operated at the highest level in battle in defense of our freedom – a legitimate war hero who was a funny, loving, kind, dedicated man, who, in the end, was overrun by the enemy in the invisible war. The family is asking for your continued prayers, but not just for them, but also for the countless service men and women who are hurting and fighting similar battles as Mark's right now.

Mark was a valiant and professional warrior who was trained in accomplishing assigned yet dangerous missions. On one particular assignment, he suffered a head injury which resulted in damage to his brain, yet he continued to serve even though the damage caused ramifications that were never physically resolved. This condition is referred to as a TBI: traumatic brain injury.

Neurological damage usually occurs by a violent blow to the the brain and may result in problems with speech, dizziness, behavioral issues; mood swings, difficulty with sleeping; seizures; close proximity to explosions which Mark suffered from three significant events of this type. Common ramifications from these events can include nightmares.

Alcohol is a way for a person to get some sleep. This is a way that those who suffer from PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, can escape from repeated engagements in multiple battles.

The ongoing confrontation with consistent danger plus suffering from a Traumatic Brain Injury, put great pressure on Mark's injured brain.

Mark's battles did not end with retirement. Ergo: post-traumatic stress; he fought these battles with alcohol. Alcohol is sought because it lets the body relax eliminating body and mental stress. Yet these issues compounded over time.

The body needs sugar but without eating properly the sugar content of one's body is diminished and alcohol is a ready fix. It also allows the person to get some rest by going to sleep.

How prevalent is this condition in America? Well, there are statistics on this. Among those serving or retired from military service, the average number of suicides are presently at a level of 22 per day. That means that this event occurs 8,030 times a year.

For Mark's family, these 22 per day was a statistic up until Thursday.

What I have just related to you is a good synopsis of Mark Davey. He was literally a Christian Soldier. By that I mean that as a believer in Jesus Christ, he took up arms and was trained to go and defeat the enemies of our client nation. He served on numerous other assignments and was considered to be an expert sniper.

I have learned from the family that, as an expression of gratitude for his service to his country, Mark Davey and his legacy will ultimately be laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The internment will occur sometime next year once an appropriate time slot is found in the schedule.

In closing, I extend, along with Jo Henra and our entire family, our sorrow over the death of Mark Davey. This sorrow is based on his absence which means no further fellowship in time, but mollified by the biblical doctrine of a happy reunion in heaven confirmed by the promise found in:

**2 Corinthians 5:6, 8** Being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be face-to-face at home with the Lord.

Father, we are comforted that by your matchless grace, Mark Davey is free of his injuries that caused him to lose complete control over his volitional decisions. These injuries were the result of doing his sworn duty to his country. One of his major duties were to kill the enemy, an act that honorable people do not consider, but in the hostile environment of the devil's world there are those whose thoughts are of a different ilk. This often leads client nations to ring the bells of war and in doing so, honorable men are honorably commanded to, "Kill the enemy!" Thus, those of a peaceful mind are led to defend the shores to defend the innocent. Mark Davey was one of those who took up the challenge. He was a fine man. Devoted to his loved ones. Submissive to biblical absolutes. Focused on the mission to defeat the enemies of peace. And a devoted warrior who was able to inflict violence on those who fomented war. Thank you for men such as Mark and others like him. Mark fought to two battlefields – the visible war against our nation's enemies, the latter fomented by Lucifer's machination from the Dark Side.

Mark did his duties on both fronts. The duties took him into Harm's Way. He was a casualty in scum of cosmic chaos and in doing so, he received for his efforts, injuries to his brain. He is now free of these handicaps. He is absent from the body. He is face-to-face before his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Thus, we thank you for your matchless grace.

Mark was a good soldier of the United States of America. He was a good soldier in the scum of the Angelic Conflict. He was a casualty within the cosmic chaos, but a winner in interim body before our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Thank You for allowing us to know Mark Davey, a good soldier for Christ.

We lift our prayer of gratitude in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who is *'Athonay Sebaoth*, the Lord of the Armies. Amen.