



TRUE COURAGE | *A Memorial Sermon For General Thomas J. “Stone-wall” Jackson*

by Robert L. Dabney

INTRODUCTION

Stonewall Jackson

General Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall” Jackson, born in the mountains of what is now West Virginia on Jan. 21, 1824, ranks among the most valiant soldiers and skillful tacticians in all military history. After graduating from West Point, Jackson served with distinction in the Mexican War and then returned to Virginia to teach natural philosophy and artillery tactics at Virginia Military Institute for 10 years. While in Lexington Jackson lived an exemplary life, serving as a Deacon in the Presbyterian Church and founding and teaching in a Sunday School for slaves.

With the war Jackson entered the service of the Confederacy. He was given his famous nick-name on July 21, 1861, at the first battle of Manassas. Confederate troops had been put to flight by a powerful Union advance. General Bernard Bee of South Carolina, seeking desperately to stem the tide, saw Jackson and his troops standing firm. Bee cried, “There stands Jackson like a stone wall. Rally behind the Virginians!” With that stand the battle turned from a Confederate defeat to a Federal rout, and from that day forward Jackson’s was known as the Stone-wall Brigade. Of this engagement Jackson wrote to his wife on July 22nd, “Yesterday we fought a great battle, and gained a great victory, for which all the glory is due *to God alone*.”¹

In 1863, while defeating Federal forces at Chancellorsville, Jackson was accidentally shot by his own men and died eight days later. General Lee lamented, “I know not how to replace him.”

Robert L. Dabney

The sermon that follows was delivered by Robert L. Dabney (1820-1898), pastor, theologian, philosopher, scholar, educator, statesman, author, and social critic—among the ablest expositors and defenders of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in his day. Graduate of the University of Virginia and Union Theological Seminary (at Hampden-Sydney), Dabney served as pastor of the Tinkling Spring Presbyterian Church (1847-1853), and thereafter was appointed first to the chair of ecclesiastical history and polity, and then to the chair of systematic theology at Union until 1883. His teaching at Union was interrupted during the War when Dabney served first as a chaplain, and then as chief of staff to Stonewall Jackson. In 1883 Dabney moved to Austin, Texas, where until 1884 he was the first professor of mental and moral philosophy at the newly established University of Texas, and was instrumental in the founding of Austin Theological Seminary.

¹For a full account of the life of Jackson, see the biography Dabney wrote, at the request of Mrs. Jackson, *The Life and Campaigns of Lieut.-Gen. Thomas J. Jackson* (New York, 1866); reprint (Harrisonburg: VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1977). The full text of the letter cited here is on page 229.

When Dabney's students sought a figure fit to compare to their beloved teacher they struggled to find one worthy:

In point of intellectual energy and power we not only regard him as superior to every other man we have ever seen, but as having had no equal so far as history has had anything to say, in the whole history of christianity in this country. Thornwell was a genius; Charles Hodge was very learned and possessed a strong and massive mind. Archibald Alexander Hodge is supposed by many to have been his father's mental superior. Old Dr. Archibald Alexander has, by some of his admirers, been called the Immanuel Kant of North America. But for sheer mental might we suppose that old Jonathan Edwards was more nearly Dr. Dabney's equal.²

According to A.A. Hodge Dabney was "the profoundest thinker and writer on theological subjects, in my judgment, that America has produced."³ In B.B. Warfield's assessment, "Dr. Dabney was not only an influential statesman and a powerful ecclesiastical force, not only an acute philosopher and a profound theologian, but also a devoted Christian—which is best of all."⁴

General Jackson, beloved commander and friend, died May 10th, 1863. In June following Dabney was urgently requested to deliver a memorial sermon for Jackson in Richmond. Having agreed to this request, Dabney prepared the following discourse, and delivered it in the First Presbyterian Church, the evening of the first Sunday of June, before a large gathering of officers, soldiers, and citizens.⁵ Let the reader consider with care this stirring exposition of nature and source of "True Courage."

²Charles Dabney, Samuel B. Dabney, and Lewis M. Dabney, eds, *In Memoriam, Robert Lewis Dabney, Born, March 5th, 1820: Died, January 3rd, 1898* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1899), p. 8.

³*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴*The Princeton Theological Review* (1905).

⁵The text, with minor additions and corrections, is taken from *Discussions by Robert L. Dabney, D.D., LL.D.*, edited by C.R. Vaughan, volume IV, *Secular* (Mexico, MO: S.B. Ervin, 1897); reprint (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books and Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1979), pp. 435-452.

“Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, fear him.”—Luke 12:4-5

A little wisdom and experience will teach us to be very modest, in interpreting God’s purposes by his providences. “It is the glory of the Lord to conceal a thing.”⁶ His designs are too vast and complex for our puny minds to infer them, from the fragments of his ways which fall under our eyes. Yet, it is evident, that he intends us to learn instruction from the events which occur before us under the regulation of his holy will. The profane are more than once rebuked by him because “they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.”⁷ And our Saviour sharply chides the Jewish Pharisees: “O ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?”⁸ We are not therefore to refuse the lessons of those events which Providence evolves, because caution and humility are required in learning them. We have a guide, which will conduct us securely to the understanding of so much of them as God intends us to study: That guide is the Holy Scriptures. Among the several principles which they lay down for the explanation of God’s dealings, it is sufficient for our present task, to declare this one: That the characters of his children, which exhibit the Scriptural model, are given as examples, to be studied and imitated by us. He would thus teach us more than those abstract conceptions of Christian excellence, which are conveyed by general definitions of duty; he would give us a living picture and concrete idea. He thus aims to stimulate our aspirations and efforts, by showing us that the attainments of holiness are within human reach. He enstamps the moral likeness on the imitative soul by the warmth of admiration and love. That such is the use God intends us to make of noble examples, the Apostle James teaches us—“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience”;⁹ and the Epistle to the Hebrews when it desires us to “be followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.”¹⁰

Common sense teaches us then, from these texts, that the lesson is important and impressive, in proportion as the example given us was illustrious. By this rule, God addresses to us instruction of solemn emphasis, in the character, and the death, which we have now met to commemorate. Our dead hero is God’s sermon to us, his embodied admonition, his incorporate discourse, to inculcate upon us the virtues with which he was adorned by the Holy Ghost; and especially those traits of the citizen, the Christian, and the soldier, now most essential to the times. He calls us, not to exhaust the occasion in useless sensibilities, but to come and learn the beauty of holiness, by the light of a shining example; and to let our passionate love and grief burn in upon the plastic¹¹ heart, the impress of his principles. Happy shall I be, if I can so conceive and execute my humble task, as to permit this character to speak its own high lesson to your hearts. The only

⁶Proverbs 25:2.

⁷Isaiah 5:12.

⁸Matthew 16:3.

⁹James 5:10.

¹⁰Hebrews 6:12.

¹¹Archaic: *plastic*, “impressionable.”

reason which makes you think this task appropriate to me, is doubtless this: that I had the privilege of his friendship, and an opportunity for intimately observing his character, during the most brilliant part of his career. The expectations which you form from this fact, must be my justification from the charge of egotism, if I should allude to my own observations of him, in exemplifying these instructions. But I must also forewarn you, that should there be any expectation of mere anecdote to gratify an idle curiosity, or of any disclosures of confidential intercourse, now doubly sanctified by the seal of the tomb, it will not be gratified. And let it be added, that however the heart may prompt encomiums¹² on the departed, these are not the direct object, but only the incidental result, of this discourse. I stand here, as God's herald, in God's sanctuary, on his holy day, by his authority. My business is, not to praise any man, however beloved and bewailed, but only to unfold God's message through his life and death. Among that circle of virtues which his symmetrical character displayed, since time would fail me to do justice to all, I propose more especially, to select one, for our consideration, his Christian courage.

Courage and Its Kinds

Courage is the opposite of fear. But fear may be described either as a feeling and appreciation of existing danger, or an undue yielding to that feeling. It is in the latter sense, that it is unworthy. In the former, it is the necessary result of the natural desire for well-being, in a creature endowed with reflection and forecast. Hence, a true courage implies the existence of fear, in the form of a sense, that is, of a feeling of danger. For courage is but the overcoming of that feeling by a worthier motive. A danger unfelt is as though it did not exist. No man could be called brave for advancing coolly upon a risk of which he was totally unconscious. It is only where there is an exertion of fortitude in bearing up against the consciousness of peril, that true courage has place. If there is any man who can literally say that "he knows no fear," then he deserves no credit for his composure. True, a generous fortitude, in resisting the consciousness of danger, will partly extinguish it; so that a sensibility to it, over-sensitive and prominent among the emotions, is an indication of a mean self-love.

There are three emotions which claim the name of courage. The first is animal courage. This is but the ferment of animal passions and blind sympathies, combined with an irrational thoughtlessness. The man is courageous, only because he refuses to reflect; bold because he is blind. This animal hardihood, according to the obvious truths explained above, does not deserve the name of true courage; because there is no rational fortitude in resisting the consciousness of danger. And it is little worthy of trust; for having no foundation in a reasoning self-command, a sudden, vivid perception of the evil hitherto unnoted may, at any moment, supplant it with a panic, as unreasoning and intense as the previous fury.

The second species of courage is that prompted by the spirit of personal honor. There is a consciousness of risk; but it is manfully controlled by the sentiment of pride, the keener fear of reproach, and the desire of applause. This kind of fortitude is more worthy of the name of courage, because it exhibits self-command. But after all, the motive is personal and selfish; and therefore the sentiment does not rise to the level of a virtue.

The third species is the moral courage of him who fears God, and, for that reason, fears nothing else. There is an intelligent apprehension of danger; there is the natural instinct of self-love desiring to preserve its own well-being; but it is curbed and governed by the sense of duty, and desire for the approbation of God. This alone is true courage; true virtue; for it is rational,

¹²Def.: *encomiums*, "hymns of praise to a victor."

and its motive is moral and unselfish. It is a true Christian grace, when found in its purest forms, a grace whose highest exemplar, and whose source, is the Divine Redeemer; whose principle is that parent grace of the soul, *faith*. “David, and Samuel, and the prophets, *through faith* subdued kingdoms . . . waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”¹³ Trust in God, in his faithfulness, his approbation, his reward, his command to brave the risques allotted to them, was their motive. But “Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith.”¹⁴ This is the principle by which the soul of the believer is brought into living union with Christ; and the heart, otherwise sapless and withered, is penetrated by the vital sap of his holy Spirit. He is the head; men of faith his members; he the stock; they the branches; his divine principles circulate from him into their souls, and assimilate them to him. But the whole mission of Jesus Christ on earth is a divine exemplification of moral courage. What was it, save the unselfish sentiment of duty, overruling the anticipations of personal evil, which made him declare, in prospect of all the woes of his incarnation, “Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will Oh my God?”¹⁵ What else caused him to press forward with eager, hungering haste, through the toils and obloquy¹⁶ of his persecuted life, to that baptism of blood, which awaited him in Jerusalem? What else nerved him, when deserted, betrayed, and destined to death, desolate, and fainting, amidst a pitiless flood of enemies, one word of disclaimer might have rescued him, to refuse that word, and assert his rightful kingship over Zion, with a tenacity more indomitable than the grave? Jesus Christ is the divine pattern and fountain of heroism. Earth’s true heroes are they who derive their courage from him.

Yet it is true, the three kinds of bravery which have been defined, may be mixed in many breasts. Some who have true moral courage may also have animal hardihood; and others of the truly brave may lack it. No Christian courage, perhaps, exists without a union of that which the spirit of personal honor, in its innocent phase, inspires; and many men of honor have perhaps some shade of pure sentiment of duty, mingled with the pride and self-glorifying, which, chiefly nerve their fortitude. *But he is the bravest man who is the best Christian. It is he who truly fears God, who is entitled to fear nothing else.*

Courage and the Fear of God

He whose conduct is governed by the fear of God, is brave, because the powers of his soul are in harmony. There is no mutiny or war within, of fear against shame, of duty against safety, of conscience and evil desire, by which the bad man has his heart unnerved. All the nobler capacities of the soul combine their strength, and especially, that master power, of which the wicked are compelled to sing: “It is conscience that makes cowards of us all,” invigorates the soul with her plaudits. In conscious rectitude there is strength.

This strength General Jackson eminently possessed. He walked in the fear of God, with a perfect heart, keeping all his commandments and ordinances, blameless. Never has it been my happiness to know one of greater purity of life, or more regular and devout habits of prayer. As ever in his great task-master’s eye, he seemed to devote every hour to the sentiment of duty and only to live to fulfill his charge as a servant of God. Of this be assured, that all his eminence and success as a great and brave soldier, were based on his eminence and sanctity as a Christian. Thus,

¹³Hebrews 11:33, 34.

¹⁴Ephesians 3:17.

¹⁵Psalms 40:7-8.

¹⁶Def. *obloquy*, “verbal abuse, esp. when wide-spread.”

every power of his soul was brought to move in sweet accord, under the guidance of an enlightened and honest conscience. How could such a soul fail to be courageous for the right?

But especially did he derive firmness and decision, from the peculiar strength of his conviction concerning the righteousness and necessity of this war. Had he not sought the light of the Holy Scriptures, in thorough examination and prayer, had his pure and honest conscience not justified the act, even in the eye of that Searcher of hearts, whose fear was his ever-present, ruling principle, never would he have drawn his sword in this great quarrel, at the prompting of any sectional pride, or ambition, or interest, or anger, or dread of obloquy. But having judged for himself, in all sincerity, he decided, with a force of conviction as fixed as the everlasting hills, that our enemies were the aggressors, that they assailed vital, essential rights, and that resistance unto death was our right and duty. On the correctness of that decision, reached through fervent prayer, under the teachings of the sure word of Scripture, through the light of the Holy Spirit, which he was assured God vouchsafed to him, he stood prepared to risk, not only earthly prospects and estate, but an immortal soul; and to venture, without one quiver of doubt or fear, before the irrevocable bar of God the Judge. The great question: "What if I die in this quarrel," was deliberately settled; so deliberately, so maturely, that he was ready to venture his everlasting all upon the belief that this was the path of duty.

Courage and the Providence of God

The second reason which makes the man of faith brave, is stated in the context: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered: Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows." God's special providence is over all his creatures, and all their actions; it is over them that fear him; for their good only. By that almighty and omniscient providence, all events are either produced; or at least permitted, limited, and overruled. There is no creature so great as to resist its power, none so minute as to evade its wisdom. Each particular act among the most multitudinous which confound our attention by their number, or the most fortuitous, which entirely baffle our inquiry into their causes, is regulated by this intelligent purpose of God. Even when the thousand missiles of death, invisible to mortal sight, and sent forth aimless by those who launched them, shoot in inexplicable confusion over the battle-field, his eye gives each one an aim and a purpose, according to the plan of his wisdom. Thus teacheth our Saviour.

Now, the child of God is not taught what is the special will of God as to himself; he has no revelation as to the security of his person. Nor does he presume to predict what particular dispensation God will grant to the cause in which he is embarked. But he knows that, be it what it may, it will be wise, and right, and good. Whether the arrows of death shall smite him or pass him by, he knows no more than the unbelieving sinner; but he knows that neither event can happen him without the purpose and will of his Heavenly Father. And that will, be it whichever it may, is guided by divine wisdom and love. Should the event prove a revelation of God's decision, and this was the place, and this the hour, for life to end; then he accepts it with calm submission; for are not the time and place chosen for him by the All-wise, who loves him from eternity? Him who walks in the true fear of God, God loves. He hath adopted him as his son forever, through his faith on the righteousness of the Redeemer. The divine anger is forever extinguished by the atonement of the Lamb of God, and the unchangeable love of God is conciliated to him by the spotless righteousness of his substitute. The preciousness of the unspeakable gift which God gave for his redemption, even the life of the Only-begotten, and the earnest of the Holy Ghost, bestowed upon him at first while a guilty sinner, are the arguments to this believer, of the richness

and strength of God's love to him. He knows that a love so eternal, so free, so strong, in the breast of such a God and Saviour, can leave nothing unbestowed, which divine wisdom perceives to be for his true good. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."¹⁷ And this love has enlisted for his safeguard, all the attributes of God, which are the security of his own blessedness. Why dwelleth the divine mind in ineffable, perpetual peace? Not because there are none to assail it; but because God is conscious in himself of infinite resources, for defense and victory; of a knowledge which no cunning can deceive; of a power which no combination can fatigue. Well, these same attributes, which support the stability of Jehovah's throne, surround the weakest child of God, with all the zeal of redeeming love. "The eternal God is his refuge; and underneath him are the everlasting arms."¹⁸ Therefore saith the Apostle, that the believer hath "his heart and mind garrisoned by the peace of God which passeth all understanding."¹⁹ And therefore our Saviour saith, with a literal emphasis of which our faint hearts are slow to take in the full glory: "Peace I leave with you; *my* peace I give unto you."²⁰ In proportion as God's children have faith to embrace the love of God to them, are they lifted in spirit to his very throne, and can look down upon the rage of battle, and the tumult of the people, with some of the holy disdain, the ineffable security, which constitute the blessedness of God. "Their life is hid with Christ in God."²¹

It has been said that General Jackson was a fatalist, by those who knew not whereof they affirmed. He was a strong believer in the special providence of God. The doctrine of a Fate is, that all events are fixed by an immanent, physical necessity in the series of causes and effects themselves; a necessity as blind and unreasoning as the tendency of the stone towards the earth, when unsupported from beneath; a necessity as much controlling the intelligence and will of God as of creatures; a necessity which admits no modification of results through the agency of second causes, but renders them inoperative and non-essential, save as the mere, passive stepping stones in the inevitable progression. The doctrine of Providence teaches that the regular, natural agency of second causes is sustained, preserved, and regulated by the power and intelligence of God; and that in and through that agency, every event is directed by his most wise and holy will, according to his plan, and the laws of nature which he has ordained.

Fatalism tends to apathy, to absolute inaction: a belief in the providence of the Scriptures, to intelligent and hopeful effort. It does not overthrow, but rather establish the agency of second causes, because it teaches us that God's purpose to effectuate events only through them (save in the case of miracles) is as steadfast, as his purpose to carry out his eternal plan.²² Hence it produces a combination of courageous serenity,—with cheerful diligence in the use of means. My illustrious leader was as laborious as he was trustful; and laborious precisely because he was trustful. Every thing that self-sacrificing care, and preparation, and forecast, and toil, could do, to prepare and to earn success, he did. And therefore it was, that God, without whom "the watchman waketh in vain,"²³ usually bestowed success. So likewise, his belief in the superintendence of the Almighty was a most strong and living conviction. In every order, or dispatch, announcing a

¹⁷Romans 8:32.

¹⁸Deuteronomy 33:27.

¹⁹Philippians 4:7.

²⁰John 14:27.

²¹Colossians 3:3.

²²Cf. Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 5.

²³Psalms 127:1.

victory, he was prompt to ascribe the result to the Lord of Hosts; and those simple, emphatic, devout ascriptions were with him no unmeaning formalities. In the very flush of triumph, he has been known to seize the juncture for the earnest inculcation of this truth upon the minds of his subordinates. On the momentous morning of Friday, June 27th, 1862, as the different corps of the patriot army were moving to their respective posts, to fill their parts in the mighty combination of their chief, after Jackson had held his final interview with him, and resumed his march for his position at Cold Harbour, his command was misled, by a misconception of his guides, and seemed about to mingle with, and confuse, another part of our forces. More than an hour of seemingly precious time was expended in rectifying this mistake; while the booming of cannon in the front told us that the struggle had begun, and made our breasts thrill with an agony of suspense, lest the irreparable hour should be lost by our delay; for we had still many miles to march. When this anxious fear was suggested privately to Jackson, he answered, with a calm and assured countenance: "No; let us trust that the providence of our God will so overrule it, that no mischief shall result." And verily; no mischief did result. Providence brought us precisely into conjunction with the bodies with which we were to co-operate; the battle was joined at the right juncture and by the time the stars appeared, the right wing of the enemy, with which he was appointed to deal, was hurled in utter rout, across the river. More than once, when sent to bring one of his old brigades into action, I had noticed him sitting motionless upon his horse with his right hand uplifted, while the war worn column poured in stern silence close by his side. At first it did not appear whether it was mere abstraction of thought, or a posture to relieve his fatigue. But at Port Republic, I saw it again; and watching him more narrowly, was convinced by his closed eyes and moving lips, that he was wrestling in silent prayer. I thought that I could surmise what was then passing through his fervent soul; the sovereignty of that Providence which worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, and giveth the battle not to the strong, nor the race to the swift:²⁴ his own fearful responsibility, and need of that counsel and sound wisdom, which God alone can give; the crisis of his beloved country, and the balance trembling between defeat and victory; the precious lives of his veterans, which the inexorable necessities of war compelled him to jeopardize; the immortal souls passing to their account, perhaps unprepared; the widowhood and orphanage which might result from the orders he had just been compelled to issue. And as his beloved men swept by him to the front, into the storm of shot, doubtless his great heart, as tender as it was resolute, yearned over them in unutterable longings and intercessions, that "the Almighty would cover them with his feathers, and that his truth might be their shield and buckler."²⁵ Surely the moral grandeur of this scene was akin to that, when Moses stood upon the Mount of God, and lifted up his hands, while Israel prevailed against Amalek!²⁶ And what soldier would not desire to have the shield of such prayers, under which to fight? Were they not a more powerful element of success than the artillery, or the bayonets of the Stonewall Brigade?

Courage and the Security of the Soul

The true fear of God ensures the safety of the immortal soul. United to Christ by faith, adopted into the unchanging favor of God, and heir of an inheritance in the skies which is as secure as the throne of God, the believing soul, is lifted above the reach of bodily dangers. But the soul is the true man, the true self, the part which alone feels or knows, desires or fears, sorrows or

²⁴Ephesians 1:11; Ecclesiastes 9:11.

²⁵Psalms 91:4.

²⁶Exodus 17.

rejoices, and which lives forever. It is its fate which is irrevocable. If it be lost, all is lost; and finally lost; if it be secure, all other losses are secondary, yea, in comparison, trivial. To the child of God, the rage of enemies, mortal weapons, and pestilence are impotent. True, he has no assurance that they may not reach his body, but they reach his body only, and,

If the plague come nigh,
 And sweep the wicked down to hell,
 T'will raise the saints on high.

This is our Saviour's argument, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body; and after that *have no more that they can do.*" Pagan fable perhaps intended to foreshadow this glorious truth, when it described its hero with a body made invulnerable by its bath in the divine river, and therefore insensible to fear, and indifferent to the weapons of death. But the spiritual reality of the allegory is found only in the Christian, who has washed his soul from the stain of sin (which alone causes its death), in the Redeemer's blood. He is the invulnerable man. "The arrow cannot make him flee; darts are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of a spear."²⁷ He shares, indeed the natural affections and instincts which make life sweet to every man, and bodily pain and death formidable. But these emotions of his sensuous being are counteracted by his faith, which gives to his soul a substantial, inward sense of heavenly life, as more real and satisfying than the carnal. The clearer the faith of the Christian, the more complete is this victory over natural fears. To the mere unbeliever, this mortal life is his all-in-all, bodily death is utter extinction, pain is the master evil, and the grave is covered by a horror of great darkness unrelieved by one ray of hope or light. And Christians of a weaker type, in their weaker moments, cannot shake off the shuddering of nature in the presence of these, the supreme evils of natural man. But as faith brightens, that tremor is quieted; the more substantial the grasp of faith on eternal realities, the more does the giant death dwindle in his proportions, the less mortal does his sword appear, the narrower and more trivial seems the gap which he makes between this life and the higher; because that better life is brought nearer to the apprehension of the soul. Does the eagle lament to see the wolf ravage its deserted nest, as it betakes itself to its destined skies, and nerves its young pinions and fires its eyes in the beam of the king of day? The believer knows also, that should his body be smitten into the grave, the resurrection day will repair all the ravages of the sword, and restore the poor tenement to his occupancy, "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body."²⁸ He can adopt the boast of inspiration: "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."²⁹ Amidst the storm of the battle, and even the wreck of defeat, his steadfast heart knows no fear.

But that the enemy of God should have courage in battle, is incomprehensible to me. It can only be explained by thoughtlessness. When the danger which assails the body reaches the soul also, when the weapon that lays the body in the dust, will plunge the soul into everlasting and intolerable torments, by what philosophy can a reasoning being brace himself to meet it? He who has not God for his friend, has no right to be brave. But we should be far from inferring thence, that the citizen who is conscious of his enmity to God, is therefore justified in shunning

²⁷Job 41:28-29.

²⁸Philippians 3:21.

²⁹Psalms 46:1-2.

the exposure to this risk, at the expense of duty and honor. This would be but to add sin to sin, and folly to folly. If safety is not found in the path of duty, still more surely it will not be found, when out of it. He is in the greatest danger, who is disobeying God; and infinite wisdom and power can never be at a loss for means to strike their enemy, however far removed wounds and weapons of war may be. To refuse a recognized duty is the surest way to alienate the mercy of God, and to grieve the Holy Ghost, on whom we depend for faith and repentance. The only safe or rational course therefore, for the ungodly soldier, is to make his peace with God at once; and thus advance with well-grounded confidence in the path of his duty, and of all men, the soldier has the strongest reason to become a Christian!

The Lesson of the Life of Jackson

Such was the foundation of the courage of Jackson. He walked with God, in conscious integrity; and he embraced with all his heart "the righteousness of God which is by the faith of Jesus Christ." His soul, I believe, dwelt habitually in the full assurance that God was his God, and his portion forever. His manly and vigorous faith brought heaven so near, that death had slight terrors for him. While it would be unjust to charge him with rashness in exposure to danger, yet whenever his sense of duty prompted it, he seemed to risk his person with an absolute indifference to fear. The sense of his responsibilities to his country, and the heat of his mighty spirit in the crisis of battle, might sometimes agitate him vehemently; but never was the most imminent personal peril seen to disturb his equanimity for one moment. It is a striking trait of the impression which he has made upon his countrymen, that while no man could possibly be farther from boasting, it always became the first article of the belief of those subject to his command, that he was, of course, a man of perfect courage.

But courage alone does not explain the position which he held in the hearts of his people. In this land of heroic memories and brave men, others besides Jackson have displayed true courage. God did not endow him with several of those native gifts which are supposed to allure the idolatry of mankind towards their heroes. He affected no kingly mien nor martial pomp; but always bore himself with the modest propriety of the Christian. Nor did he ever study or practice those arts, by which a Bonaparte or an Alexander kindled the enthusiasm of their followers. The only manifestation which he ever made of himself was in the simple and diligent performance of the duties of his office. His part on the battle-field was usually rather suggestive of the zeal and industry of the faithful servant, than of the contagious exaltation of a master-spirit. Nature had not given to him even the corporeal gift of the trumpet tones, with which other leaders are said to have roused the divine phrensy in their followers. It was only at times that his modest and feeble voice was lifted up to his hosts; and then, as he shouted his favorite call: "Press forward," the fiery energy of his will, thrilled through his rapid utterance, rather like the deadly clang of the rifle than the sonorous peal of the clarion. His was a master-spirit; but it was too simply grand to study dramatic sensations. It impressed its might upon the souls of his countrymen, not through deportment, but through deeds. Its discourses were toilsome marches and battles joined, its perorations were the thunder-claps of defeat hurled upon the enemies of his country. It revealed itself to us only through the purity and force of his action; and therefore the intensity of the effect he has produced.

This may help to explain the enigma of his reputation. How is it that this man, of all others least accustomed to exercise his own fancy, or address that of others, has stimulated the imagination, not only of his countrymen, but of the civilized world, above all the sons of genius among us? How has he, the most unromantic of great men, become the great hero of a living ro-

mance, the ideal of an inflamed fancy in every mind, even before his life had passed into history! How did that calm eye kindle the fire of so passionate a love and admiration in the heart of his people? He was brave, but not the only brave. He revealed transcendent military talent; but the diadem of his country now glows with a galaxy of such talent. He was successful; but we have more than one captain, whose banner never trailed before an enemy.

I will tell you the solution. It was, chiefly, the singleness, purity, and elevation of his aims. Every one who observed him was as thoroughly convinced of his unselfish devotion to duty as of his courage; as certain that no thought of personal advancement, of ambition or applause, ever for one instant divided the homage of his heart with his great cause, and that "all the ends he aimed at were his country's, his God's, and truth's," as that he was brave. The love of his countrymen is the spontaneous testimony of the common conscience, to the beauty of holiness. It is the confession of our nature that the virtue of the Sacred Scriptures, which is a virtue purer and loftier than that of philosophy, is the true greatness, grander than knowledge, talent, courage, or success. Here, then, as I believe, is God's chief lesson in his life and death (and the belief encourages auspicious hopes concerning God's design towards us.) He would teach us the beauty and power of pure Christianity, as an element of our social life, of our national career. Therefore he took an exemplar of Christian sincerity, as near perfection as the infirmities of our nature would permit, formed and trained in an honorable retirement; he set it in the furnace of trial, at an hour when great events and dangers had awakened the popular heart to most intense action; he illustrated it with that species of distinction which above all others, attracts the popular gaze, military glory; and held it up to the admiring inspection of a country grateful for the deliverances it had wrought for us. Thus he has taught us, how good a thing fear is. He has made all men see and acknowledge that, in this man, his Christianity was the fountain head of the virtues and talents, which they so rapturously applauded; that it was the fear of God which made him so fearless of all else; that it was the love of God which animated his energies; that it was the singleness of his aims which caused his whole body to be so full of light, that the unerring decisions of his judgment, suggested to the unthinking, the belief in his actual inspiration; and that the lofty chivalry of his nature was but the reflex of the Spirit of Christ. Do not even the profane admit this explanation of his character? Here, then, is God's lesson, in this life, to the Confederate States: "It is righteousness that exalteth." Hear it young men, ye soldiers, ye magistrates, ye law-givers; that "he that exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."³⁰

The Lesson of the Death of Jackson

But what would he teach us by his death, to our view so untimely? To this question, human reason can only answer, that God's judgments are far above us, and past our finding out.

One lovely Sabbath, riding alone with me to a religious service in a camp, General Jackson was talking of the general prospects of the war, hopefully, as he ever did. But at the close, he assumed an air of intense seriousness, and said: "I do not mean to convey the impression that I have not as much to live for as any man, and that life is not as sweet. But I do not desire to survive the independence of my country." Can this death be the answer to that wish? Can the solution be, that having tried us, and found us unworthy of such a deliverer, God has hid his favorite in the grave, in the brightness of his hopes, and before his blooming honors received any blight from disaster, from the calamities which our sins are about to bring upon us? Nay; we will not believe that the legacy of Jackson's prayers was all expended by us, when he died; they will yet

³⁰Luke 18:14.

avail for us all the more, that they are now sealed by his blood. The deliverance of the Jews did not end with the untimely end of Judas Maccabee. The death of William of Orange was not the death of the Dutch Republic. The lamented fall of John Hampden was not the fall of the liberties of England. And, if we may reverently associate another instance with these, the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, was, contrary to the fears of his disciples, but the beginning of the sect of the Nazarenes. So, let us hope, the tree of our liberties will flourish but the more for the precious blood by which it is watered.

May it not be, that God, after enabling him to render all the service which was essential to our deliverance, and showing us in him, the brightest example of the glory of Christianity, has bid him enter into the joy of the Lord, at this juncture, in order to warn us against our incipient idolatry, and make us say: "It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes?"³¹ No man would more strongly deprecate this idolatry of human instruments, than Jackson, and never so strongly, as when addressed to himself. None can declare more emphatically than would he, if he spoke to us from the skies, that while man is mortal, the cause is immortal. Away then, with unmanly discouragements, God lives, though our hero is dead.

That he should have toiled so hard for the independence of his country, and so ardently desired it; and then at last, be forbidden to hail the day of our final deliverance, or to receive the grateful honors which his fellow-citizens were preparing for him; this has saddened every heart with a pang both tender and pungent. The medicine to this pain, my brethren, is to remember, that he has entered into a triumph and peace, so much more glorious than that which he bled to achieve for his country. It would have been sweet to us, to hail him returning from his last victory to a delivered and enfranchised country; sweet to see and sympathize with the joy with which he hung up his sword, and paid the sacrifices of thanksgiving in the courts of the Lord's house; sweet to witness, with reverent respect, the domestic bliss of the home for which he so much sighed, solacing him for his long fatigues. That happiness *we* have lost; but *he* has lost nothing. He has laid down his sword at the footstool of his Father God; he now sings his thanksgiving song in a nobler sanctuary than the earthly one he loved so much; he "bathes his weary soul in seas of heavenly rest."

We who loved him, while we bewail our own loss, should not forget the circumstances which alleviate the grief of his death. Surely, it was no ill-chosen time for God to call him to his rest, when his powers were in their undimmed prime, and his military glory at its zenith; when his greatest victory had just been won; and the last sounds of earth which reached him were the thanksgivings and blessings of a nation in raptures for his achievements; in tears for his sufferings. I love to remember, too, that his martyr-life had just been gladdened by the gratification of those affections which were in him so sweet and strong, and which yet, he sacrificed, so patiently, for his country.

Still more do we thank God that it was practicable, as it might not have been at an earlier, or a later period, for him to enjoy those ministrations of love, in his last days, which were the dearest solace of his sufferings. Into the sacredness of those last communings, and of the grief which survives them in his widowed home, we may not allow even our thoughts to intrude. And yet, may not a mourning nation venture to utter their blessing on the mourning heart which blessed him with its love; and to pray, that the breast which so magnanimously calmed its tumult,

³¹Psalm 118:9.

to make a quiet pillow for the dying head of their hero, may be visited by God, with the most healing balm of heavenly consolation? Will not all the people say: amen?

Nor will they forget the tender flower, sole off-shoot of the parent stock, born to bloom amidst the wintry storms of war, which he would fain have forbidden the summer breeze to visit too roughly. The giant tree which would have shielded it with pride so loving, lies prone before the blast. But his God will be its God; and as long as the most rugged breast of his hardy comrades is warm, it will not lack for a parent's tenderness.

And now, with one more lesson, I leave you to the teachings of the mighty dead. If there was one trait which was eminent in him above the rest, it was determination. This was the power, before whose steady and ardent heat obstacles melted away. This was the force, which caused his battalions to breast the onset of the enemy like ramparts of stone, or else launched them irresistibly upon their shivered lines. It was his unconquerable will, and purpose never to submit or yield. Every one who was near him imbibed something of this spirit, for they saw that in him the acceptance of defeat was an impossibility. To that conclusion no earthly power could bend his iron will. Let his example commend to us the same steadfast temper. In his fall and that of the noble army of martyrs, every generous soul should read a new argument for defending the cause for which he died, with invincible tenacity. Surely their very blood might cry out against us from the ground, if we permitted the soil, which drank the precious libation to be polluted with the despot's foot! Shall it ever be, that our discouragement or cowardice shall make the sacrifice vain? If we consent to this, then was it not treacherous in us to invite it? We should rather have warned them to restrain their generosity, to save the lives they were so ready to lay upon their country's altar, as too precious to be wasted for a land occupied by predestined slaves and cowards, and to carry their patriotism and their gifts to some more propitious clime, and some worthier companionship.

Such are the thoughts which should inspire the heart of every one who stands beside the grave of Jackson. Around that green and swelling hill stands the circle of solemn mountain peaks keeping everlasting watch over the home which he loved and the tomb where his ashes sleep, majestic when the summer sunset bathes them in azure and gold, but more grandly steadfast, when they are black with storms and winter. So, let us resolve, we will guard the honor and the rights for which he dies, in the hour of triumph, and more immovably in the hour of disaster.