

# **The Fallen**

May 24, 2009 – Pastor Ronnie Wolfe  
Memorial Day Sermon

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*Psalm 44:22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.*

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This is the time of the year when we remember our fallen, those who have died before us, those who have gone on before and left us behind to carry on the affairs of this world. We remember at this time of the year those who have made the deepest impressions on our lives. We take the time to ponder their lives, their memories and their contributions to the world, especially their contributions to our personal lives, impressions that will not easily go away.

In this message today we shall take a casual journey down the corridors of time to reminisce some who have not only gone before us but many who have given their lives to guard the freedoms that we have in this wonderful country of America.

## **As Americans We Remember**

As Americans we can and must remember those who have acquired and guarded our freedoms, the freedoms that we take for granted every day. Perhaps today we can stop long enough to remember the price they paid, a debt they owed, but a debt that we all owe: to protect our country's freedoms.

America has fought many battles and wars. It is not only interesting but proper to recount some of the statistics concerning some of the wars that our country has fought. In our minds the memories of Iraq are most vivid. In that war 4,296 people have died since March 19, 2003, 68 since Obama's

inauguration. The total wounded in that war stands presently at 31,249.

Some of us can remember the days of the Vietnam War. In that war 58,196 lost their lives. These names are listed on the Vietnam Memorial. About 304,000 were wounded, and about 10,000 are still missing in action. Many of us watched the incessant slaughter on the TV from day to day as the reporters fed the war into our homes. We should remember these dead.

The Vietnam War had many objectors; but despite what anyone may think of the war itself, we still must remember the dead who died, not in vain, but for the purpose of protecting our country from harm.

In World War II, the deadliest war ever fought by our country, approximately 416,800 military soldiers died for the United States. We still know and honor many who were in that war who are living, and our appreciation and honor goes to them today and every day as we denote what they have done for our country.

During that time, someone has counted 5,752,400 people died in the Holocaust. This is a very conservative number. Many in our modern world are trying to forget the horrors of the Holocaust, even to the extent that they try to disavow its ever happening; but several still live who were objects of its cruel perils. The Holocaust should be a stark reminder of how horrible conditions can be under dictatorial leadership. May God save this country from dictatorial clutches. May we ever defend our freedoms and guard our government with involvement and with knowledge so that our government will never come to be ruled by a cruel dictator.

Now we pass backward in time to World War I. In that war 112,000 Americans died. Nearly half of these died of disease. Few World War I veterans remain with us, but our memory still stands burned in our minds of the stories that have been told of this terrible war.

When we go back to the Civil War we find that approximately 620,000 people died in that war. In that terrible war, families fought against one another, and North and South were separated. There were brave men on both sides of this war, and America has both lost and benefitted from this war. We are here today remembering all of these many people who have died in defense of our country in one way or the other. These are our honored dead, and they will be ever on our minds

### **As American We Remember These Many Lost**

#### **As Baptists We Remember**

First of all we remember John the Baptist, who lost his head as a result of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He had a very short life, but his life was full of the purpose of God and the glory of God. He gave his life to God's purpose. God sent him to baptize, and that is what he did. He preached "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This is the same sermon that the Lord preached when he came on the scene a little later than John. Jesus honored John when he said concerning him, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11). He was a martyr for the Lord.

Then we notice Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. He was the martyr mentioned in Acts Chapter 6. He preached a sermon to the Jewish leaders concerning the history of Israel and their turning from the truth of God and killed the prophets and refused to recognize the deity of the Lord, Jesus Christ, whom they crucified. They stoned him to death as he called out to the Heavenly Father to receive his spirit.

In the book of Revelation Chapter 2, verse 13, we read of a man called Antipas, whose only reference in the Bible is that he was God's faith martyr, killed for his faith. It is written of the

apostles that most if not all of them died a martyr's death. They were determined to live for God and to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we read our Baptist history, we find people like Michael Satler, 1527 and Leonard Schoener, 1528. We read of 150 Anabaptists slain at a place called Alzey in 1529, Cranmer and others. Through their faith these martyrs have kept the faith of the Baptists going throughout these 2,000 years, and that faith will continue until Jesus returns. Take some time to read our Baptists histories, and be thankful for all the great martyrs who give us resignation to keep up the work of God in our day.

#### **As Americans We Remember**

#### **As Baptist We Remember**

#### **As Church Members We Remember**

We remember the many members of First Baptist Church who have been faithful for many years and who have now gone to be with the Lord. Their memories will last for many years; then their memories will fade as new people come into the church who never knew them. But even then we should remember their dedication and their love for the Lord and for his church.

A great number of people contributed their physical labor in the building of this beautiful building. Many also gave of their money and their means to make this building possible. Many went out on visitation to bring in prospective members, and the church grew as a result.

God gave a great pastor, Bro. Charles Ashcraft, who was a stalwart of the faith and a wonderful "people person." Everyone loved Bro. Ashcraft, and I was privileged to be here and have much fellowship with him before he died. If you met him, you would not easily forget him.

In recent years we have lost people who have been faithful to First Baptist Church for many years. Those of us who remember them will not easily forget them. From time to time we mention their names in memory of them and express our appreciation for their dedication. Even Bro. Russell Broughton, who thought he would never die, has gone to be with the Lord and is enjoying the blessings of Heaven.

**As Americans We Remember**

**As Baptists We Remember**

**As Church Members We Remember**

**As Family We Remember**

We remember our parents, that mother and father who trained us in the ways of the Lord; and even if you did not have Christian parents, you will remember their love for you and their dedication to give you the necessities of life. We visit them through photographs, visiting the “home place,” talking with those who knew them, reminiscing about events in our childhood, visiting their graves, and working on family trees.

We remember sisters and brothers who have died, daughters and sons who have died, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins who have died. These are for most of us fond memories, and Memorial Day has been set aside for us to remember, first of all our military dead, those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country, then our martyred saints who gave their lives for the faith, the church members we have lost in death, and our own families who have gone on before us.

But what should this mean to each one of us here today? Should it not send a clarion call to each one of us that death is inevitable? Should it not give us pause to think about the consequences of

death? We should each notice the two principles laid down in Heb 9:27 *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:* The first principle is that every is appointed to die. As we live our lives, we take little time to think about death; however, the older we get the more we do think about it. This principle can guide our lives, dictating to us that we are living every day closer to our death than the day before. If we can ever get hold of this principle as believers, we will live our lives as if today might be our last day to live, and our lives should be lived for the Lord every day. The second principle is that after death is the judgment. Romans 14:12 tells us that *every one of us shall give account of himself before God*. If you are saved, you will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. If you are lost, you will stand before the Great White Throne Judgment of God. Either way, after death you will be judged. For the lost person, judgment will come in a horrible way, since the lost will be judged according to his unworthy works in this life; and if he has not repented of sins, he will perish. For the saved, the judgment will be, not to judge us as to whether we are saved or not, but judged according to how we have followed the Lord in our lives here on earth. Notice Heb 10:31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. Into the hands of God is where each one of us will fall when we die, either for receiving the blessings of Heaven or the eternal judgment of God on the sinner whereby he will eventually be cast into the Lake of Fire which burns like brimstone.

But then how must we die? God already knows how we will die, but we are kept in the dark concerning the way in which we shall meet our demise. If you have your wish as to how you were to die, what would it be? I think it would be best for each of us to just leave it in the hands of the Lord and not worry about that part of our life.

That is, of course, if you are saved by God's grace. If you are not saved, have never been born

again, have never believed in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then you have much to think about. You must know that you are a sinner, as it is the nature of every person to be a sinner. You must know that God requires payment for sin and that you cannot pay for your own sin except to pay for it in eternity in punishment forever. You must realize that Jesus Christ has come to the earth for the express purpose of dying for the sins of people like you and me. He lived a perfect life and then went to the cross to suffer for sins. When he suffered on the cross, his Father put upon him my sins, and he suffered there for my sins, the just for the unjust. I should have died there myself, but Jesus died in my place. When he had paid for my sins and for the sins of everyone who would ever believe and trust in him, he gave up the ghost; he died and was buried and placed in a tomb. Then on the third day after his death, he resurrected, came back to life. This brought power to the believer. Paul says in Phil. 3:10 *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*

This is the concept for each of us today, the concept of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. If Jesus had not died for our sins, then we would be hopelessly lost. No one can be saved on his own merit or work. Jesus must be our intercessor to God. Jesus said in John 14:6 *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* This gives us the exclusive means by which we can have eternal life in Jesus Christ. No one can come to God except through Jesus Christ and his death.

As we remember those who have gone before us, let us remember them through the message of the Gospel. Let us remember that we, too, will have to walk through the valley of death soon and that without Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, we would be of men most miserable.

Today, if you have never been born again, come to Jesus Christ by faith and trust him as your

personal Savior. Believe that he died in your place on the cross, was laid in a tomb, and resurrected the third day for your justification. You will be saved immediately and eternally. Then you can take up your cross and follow Jesus. This will be your commitment for the rest of your life. Submit yourself to scriptural baptism, thereby making public confession of your sins and becoming a member of a local church so you can serve the Lord in and through that church to his honor and glory.

How much more honor could we give to our dead than to remember their faith in Christ and make that faith our own by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ? Can we all leave here today knowing that we have eternal life in Jesus Christ? Make it so today in your own heart. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved* (Acts 16:31).