

DEDICATION, DUTY and DESTINY

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“Only let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ... stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the Faith of the Gospel and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of Salvation and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Philippians 1:27-28

The Birkenhead

On 26 February 1852, one of the worst naval disasters occurred off the coast, near Gaansbaai, of South Africa. Her Majesty's Ship **Birkenhead** struck a rock shelf and began to sink rapidly. The Birkenhead was carrying the 74th and the 78th Highlander Regiments. These were Scottish and Irish warriors whose regiments had distinguished themselves in every conflict from the Napoleonic Wars to the Crimea. Also on board with these troops were their wives and children. It became apparent that the foundering ship was going to sink. There were very few lifeboats aboard. Nevertheless, calm prevailed.

Stand Fast

Orders were issued by Captain Salmond to place all the women and children into the few precious lifeboats. There was just enough room for the women and children. The men lined up in perfect military formation on the deck as their pipe band played. Singing Christian hymns these Scottish and Irish stalwarts went down with the Birkenhead into the shark infested waters of the South Atlantic. No man attempted to swim to the heavily laden lifeboats, as they realised that any attempt to do so could destabilise and swamp these boats and risk the lives of the women and children. The Birkenhead sank within 20 minutes. Not one woman or child was lost. Few men survived the 12 hour swim to shore. 444 men drowned that night. Of the 643 souls on board, only 193 survived. Of the 9 horses on board, 8 made it safely to the shore. ***“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ... stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the Faith of the Gospel.”*** Philippians 1:27

The soldiers and sailors of the Birkenhead exercised Christian chivalry, that in times of crisis men must give their lives that women and children may live. The discipline and self-sacrificing courage of the men of the Birkenhead inspired poet Rudyard Kipling to write: ***“So they stood and was still to the Birkenhead drill; soldier and sailor too.”*** The phrase ***“Birkenhead drill”*** came to be synonymous with courage, discipline and self-sacrificing chivalry.

The men of HMS Birkenhead certainly conducted themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ. They stood firm on a sinking ship. They did not break ranks, they did not attempt to swim to the boatloads of women and children, so as not to endanger the women and children in the fully laden life boats from being swamped or destabilised. Even as they could see the sharks circling around the sinking ship, the men stood firm. They did their duty. ***“Greater love has no-one than this that one lay down his life for his friends.”*** John 15:13

Shangani Patrol

In 1893 a small reconnaissance patrol under the command of Major Alan Wilson of the Mashonaland Mounted Police was cut off by the flooded Shangani River and encircled by thousands of Matabele warriors. Major Wilson's men fought to the last man, selling their lives dearly. After the battle, Matabele warriors came to Bulawayo and surrendered. They reported that Alan Wilson's patrol had died singing their national anthem and praying the Lord's Prayer together. ***“The white men sang,”***

they said. *"They were men of men and their fathers were men before them. If these young men could fight like lions, what will happen when their fathers come for revenge! We want to make peace now!"*

What Causes Failure?

General Constant Viljoen, who was the head of the South African Army when I was in the Infantry, addressed the issue of character under stressful situations most effectively. General Viljoen was confronted on SATV about the *"ruined lives"* of those *"psychological casualties"* suffering what they called *"the Angola Syndrome."* After showing a clip, including interviews with emotional basket cases with long hair and overflowing ashtrays, with piles of beer cans around their armchairs, the interviewer turned to General Viljoen and asked whether he felt responsible for those suffering from *"the Angola Syndrome."*

Crisis Reveals Character

General Viljoen's answer was most insightful, he noted that those who evidence character in times of peace are the same people who show courage in times of war. Those who are moral failures in civilian life are the same ones who become failures in the military. It is not the military, or the war, that ruin them. The severe stresses and crisis only reveal what was already there, either strength of character, or lack of character. Those who fail in war time would have failed in life anyway, the intensity of war just revealed it earlier. *"You have never lived until you have almost died and for those who fight for it, life has a flavour the protected will never know."*

Training for Victory

In the Army we were continually reminded: **Winners never quit! Quitters never win! Never give up. Never give in. Strive for victory.** The Army disciplined us, forced us to do without, to endure hardship, to persevere in spite of all obstacles and discouragement, even when deprived of sleep and food and pushed to the limit, to never give up and make excuses. Selection in the Army and in sports teams, is aimed at weeding out those too weak, physically, emotionally or mentally. In the Military they would deliberately discourage and tempt candidates to give up, so as to see who has what it takes to endure, adapt, persevere and overcome. ***"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."*** 2 Timothy 2:3

For Such a Time

*"To everything there is a season,
A time for every purpose under Heaven;
A time to be born and a time to die;
A time to plant and a time to pluck what is planted;
A time to kill and a time to heal;
A time to break down and a time to build up;
A time to weep and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn and a time to dance;
A time to cast away and a time to gather;
A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to gain and a time to lose;
A time to keep and a time to throw away;
A time to tear and a time to sow;
A time to keep silent and a time to speak;
A time to love and a time to hate;
A time of war and a time of peace...
He has made everything beautiful in its time.
Also He has put eternity in their hearts..."* Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

A Time to Stand

There are times when we must stand up, step out and speak up, fighting the good fight of Faith. We need to be ready to defend our family, our Faith and our future. ***"But if anyone does not provide for his own and especially for those of his household, he has denied the Faith and is worse than an unbeliever."*** 1 Timothy 5:8

Remembering Rhodesia

11 November is packed full of meaning for anyone whose relatives fought in the World Wars and for all of us who had the privilege of growing up in Rhodesia. 52 Years ago on Thursday, 11 November 1965, at the most solemn moment of the 11th hour of Armistice Day, [Ian Douglas Smith](#), the Prime Minister of Rhodesia, signed Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Great Britain.

Remembrance Day

Throughout the English speaking world, the 11th November is observed as a Remembrance Day to solemnly recall the end of hostilities of [World War One](#) at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918. In time, it has come to be observed as a Memorial Day for all who died in both World Wars and in other subsequent conflicts.

Love in Action

Numerous Memorials have this Scripture verse etched into the stone: ***"Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."*** John 15:13. Others declare: ***"...unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."*** John 12:24

Honourable Man of Integrity

I have a photograph of Prime Minister Ian Smith cycling to work in Salisbury. Ian Smith was a remarkable statesman. A man of integrity. He said what he meant and he meant what he said. He was an example of an honourable man of his word.

Never Beaten - Betrayed

As the Prime Minister of Rhodesia, Mr. Ian Smith, declared: *"We were never beaten by our enemies, we were betrayed by our friends."*

Resisting Communist Aggression

This year, 11 November, as we remember the attempt by Rhodesia to make a brave stand against the advance of Communism in Africa, we should remember the many courageous soldiers and civilians who gave their lives in that fight against terrorism and Marxism and the many innocent victims of the terrorist onslaught.

Holding the Line Against Communist Terrorism

In standing firm against Communist aggression for 15 years, Rhodesia indeed won valuable breathing space for the free world. In much the same way as the 300 Spartans held up the enormous invading force of Persians at Thermopylae and as the courageous knights of St. John resisted the Islamic invasion of the small island of Malta, I believe that, in time, history will recognise that the sacrifices and courage of Rhodesians in resisting Communist terrorism contributed to the ultimate collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989. Had Rhodesia not resisted, the consequences for South Africa could have been absolutely disastrous. Had South Africa fallen to Communism during the Cold War, the strategic Cape sea route and vital minerals essential for Western industry and defence, would have fallen into the hands of the Soviet Union - with catastrophic consequences.

Rhodesia has been Vindicated by History

The reign of terror and state sponsored terrorism of Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF regime in Zimbabwe have only vindicated Ian Smith's position. In time it will become even clearer that in no small measure Ronald Reagan's successful stand against Communist expansion in the 1980's was made possible by Rhodesia's stand against Communist terrorism in the 60's and 70's.

The Solid Rock

Where is Justice in this confused, corrupt and chaotic age? *"Beware the Victors Version!"* is what my History teacher, Mr Rees Davis at Milton High School used to say.

The Bible is the Word of God. We must know it, we must study it, believe it, apply it, live it, defend it, proclaim it. Jesus is the Way, we must **follow Him**. Jesus is the Truth. We must **trust Him**. Jesus is the Life, we must **live for Him**.

We Have an Appointment

We must live our lives in the light of eternity. ***"It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the Judgment."*** Hebrews 9:27. Mugabe, Marx and Mandela must all face the Eternal Judge and receive justice at His hand for their crimes on earth. Every knee must bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The Scripture declares that God will crush the skulls of His enemies, of all those who hate Him and kill His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the Living God!

Many lies have been told and published against us, but we should not be so concerned with what people say about us. We must be supremely concerned with what God will say to us on His Day of Judgement. **What will God say to you on that Day?**

Your eternal destiny matters. Where will you spend eternity? **God has created us for eternity.**

St. Augustine in the *"City of God"* wrote that men build men's cities and men destroy men's cities. But there is a City built by God which no man can destroy! We can be dual citizens, both of Rhodesia or South Africa and a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.

What is Heaven Like?

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 1 Corinthians 2:9

The Apostle Paul wrote: ***"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens."*** 2 Corinthians 5:1

What will Heaven be like? We are told that there will be no more hunger or thirst (Rev. 7:16); no more sorrow, crying, pain or death (Rev. 21:4); (and no more night (Rev. 22:5).)

In Heaven we will enjoy **reunion** with loved ones who have gone ahead (Genesis 25:8, 17; 35:29; 37:35; 49:33; Numbers 31:2; Deuteronomy 32:50). Earth is the land of the dying. Heaven is the land of eternal life. Those who have died in Christ are more alive today than any of us here. Including my parents, Father Arthur Lewis and Ian Douglas Smith.

We will experience **glory** (Psalm 73:23-24); **the presence of God** (Ecclesiastes 12:5-7); **Divine comfort** (Luke 16:25); **the Tree of Life** (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7); Communion with God (Matt. 22:32); **coming into possession of the treasures we sent to Heaven while on earth** (Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 12:21; 33-34; 1 Tim. 6:17-19); **opportunities to please God** (2 Cor. 5:9); **gain** (Phil. 1:21); **being with Christ which is far better** (Phil. 1:23); **perfection** (Heb. 12:23); **safety from the second death** (Rev. 2:11); **The Morning Star and authority over the nations** (Rev. 2:26-28); **Christ will confess your name before the Father and His holy angels** (Rev. 3:5; Matt. 10:32-33); **the waters of life** (Rev. 7:16); **and worship** (Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 4:9-11; 5:8-14; 7:9-12; 11; 16-18; 19:1-7).

Glorified Bodies

We will have glorified bodies. Our senses will be enlarged greatly in their capacities. We already know that, compared to some other creatures in this world, we are almost deaf and blind. What will it be like when we are released from the bondage of sin? We can hear beautiful music, which causes our hearts to thrill now, but we are limited to such a small range and scale. Imagine the sounds we will hear when we have perfect hearing on every level!

Like Eagles

Compared to the eagles we are almost blind - when you consider the telescopic, microscopic, ultraviolet and infrared sight capabilities of these magnificent birds. What will it be like in Heaven when our vision is enlarged in perfected resurrected bodies?

Unlimited

Imagine the incredible intellectual stimulation of inhabiting a sinless universe. Our fallen human minds can barely contemplate what tremendous intellectual adventures we will enjoy in Heaven. Even the greatest geniuses barely use 10% of their mental potential on earth. Imagine when all sorrow and aches and pains and grief and selfishness and anger and temper and pride and deceit and darkness and malice is removed! If we can enjoy so much beauty, even in this fallen world and under the burden of sin, imagine what indescribable beauty will be enjoyed in the Paradise of God!

"And God will wipe away every tear from our eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor sighing. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21:4

"Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37:3-5

Jesus Christ came into this world to reach those who feel that nobody cares. The Lord's unending love surrounds the one who trusts in Him. The Lord Jesus Christ does care and He is reaching the lonely and the desperate, the confused and the hurt, the depressed and the disillusioned. Jesus Christ, Himself is reaching out to you. ***"But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*** Romans 5:8

As we turn away from our sin and turn to Christ we find forgiveness and freedom:

Jesus Christ is a friend to the friendless,
A helper to the helpless.
He gives freedom to the addicts.
He loves the unloved.
He accepts the outcasts.
He changes the unchangeable.
He forgives the unforgivable.
He accomplishes the impossible.
He saves sinners.
He seeks the lost.
He gives direction to the aimless.
He gives hope to the disillusioned.
He gives Truth to the confused.
He gives joy to the depressed.
He gives purpose to the purposeless.
He gives hope to the hopeless.

He redeems and He renews.
He touches and transforms.
He answers prayer.
He works miracles before our eyes.

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; all things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

God gives the very best to those who leave the choice to Him.

We Will Stand Before Our Creator

We do not know when, or under what circumstances, our lives will come to an end. What we do know is that when we die, we will stand before Almighty God, our Creator and Eternal Judge and we will have to give an account of our lives to Him. ***"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."*** John 5:28-29

At death we leave behind everything we **have** and we take with us everything that we **are**. The character with which we die is the character with which we will appear at the Judgment. Only those who have surrendered their lives to our Lord Jesus Christ will be able to enter Heaven.

In the Light of Eternity

If you are prepared to die then you are ready for anything. Until you are free to die, you are not free to live. It ought to be our business every day to prepare for our last day. If we take care of our life, then God will take care of our death. In the Bible we are told that it is better to go to a funeral than to a party, because the living should always be reminded that death waits for us all (Ecclesiastes 7:2). ***"There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under Heaven; a time to be born and a time to die..."*** Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

"Our days on earth are like a shadow..." 1 Chronicles 29:15

"Each man's life is but a breath." Psalm 39:5. We are only one heartbeat from eternity.

Being mindful of death should make us serious, industrious and conscientious.

"Only one life, it will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last." C.T. Studd.

We need to work out our priorities in the light of Eternity. We need to invest our time, our talents and our treasure into those things which are going to last for Eternity: the people and creatures of God, the Word of God and the Kingdom of God. These are what are ultimately important

In the light of Eternity and knowing that you are going to die and stand before the Creator and Eternal Judge, you need to review your life's work, your family relationships, habits and activities.

One day you will be standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ where ***"God will judge men's secrets..."*** Romans 2:16; ***"All the harsh words..."*** Jude 15 and ***"Judge each man's work impartially..."*** 1 Peter 1:17

In Eternity: will any of us regret praying too much? Studying the Bible too intently? Sacrificing too much for God's Kingdom? Being too forgiving? Being too generous? Too evangelistic?

Are You Ready?

If you knew that you were to die next year, what would you do differently this year?

Work out your priorities in the light of Eternity.

You must be ready at all times for that which can happen at any time. **Are you ready?**

Can you say: **"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain!"** Philippians 1:21?

Make a Difference in Eternity

Make your life count for eternity! Invest your time, your talents and your treasure in seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Make disciples, teach obedience. Invest your life in the Word of God, the will of God, the work of God, the people of God and the creatures of God. Fulfil the cultural Mandate, be a good steward of God's creation. Work to fulfil the Great Commission. Make His Great Commission your supreme ambition.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our Faith..." Hebrews 12:1-2

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See also:

[Called to Courage](#)

[The 11th November](#)

[Remember Rhodesia – Pray for Zimbabwe](#)