A COMPREHENSIVE THEMATIC AND EXEGETICAL PREACHING

PLAN FOR SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN ASSIGNED

TO A COMBAT ENVIRONMENT

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A Professional Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

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by

Mark A. McDaniel

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APPROVAL SHEET

A COMPREHENSIVE THEMATIC AND EXEGETICAL PREACHING
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Mark A. McDaniel

_____

Richard T. Vann Jr., Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry
and Assistant Dean for Preaching and Pastoral Studies,
Supervisor

_____

Deron Biles, Dean of the Southwestern Center for Extension
Education and Associate Professor of Old Testament

_____

Calvin Pearson, Associate Professor of Preaching
and E. Hermond Westmoreland Chair of Preaching

_____

James T. Spivey Jr., Senior Fellow and Professor of Church
History, B. H. Carroll Theological Institute,
Field Supervisor

Date _____

To

Brandi, my loving wife, without your sacrifice, this report
would not have occurred

My girls, Isabella Grace and Hannah Joy

My father, Alvin W. McDaniel, who inspired me to serve my country through his
thirty-two years of Air Force service

My mother, Ivy McDaniel

My father-in-law, Steve Longino, and mother-in-law Patricia Longino

The men and women of the 301st Fighter Wing whom God has called me to serve

To my staff at the 301st Fighter Wing:
Chaplain Theodore Nicholson, Chaplain Nathaniel Powell, Chaplain George Jones,
MSgt (Retired) Ragina Battles, TSgt Todd DeWolfe

The 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Chaplain Section:
Chaplain David Fitz-Patrick, Chaplain Carl Wright, Chaplain David Sturgeon,
Chaplain David Del Prado, Master Sergeant Barbara Van Dalen,
Staff Sergeant Matthew Wisecarver, and Senior Airman Lowell Wann

The men and women of the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing

The faculty, administration and student body of Arlington Baptist College

The pastor, staff and members of Pleasantview Baptist Church
who supported my family during my deployment

World Baptist Fellowship of Churches

My mentors Chaplain Jerry Pitts, Chaplain John Sanders,
and Chaplain Keith Darlington,

My friends Chaplain Eric Whitmore and Chaplain Rolf Holmquist

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ--
my eternal gratitude
and thanksgiving

ABSTRACT

A COMPREHENSIVE THEMATIC AND EXEGETICAL PREACHING
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TO A COMBAT ENVIRONMENT

This project report argues that a clear and comprehensive approach to sermon preparation is needed to minister effectively to the emotional and spiritual needs of servicemen and women deployed to Balad Air Base, Iraq during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM.

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis and provides a context to the combat environment of Logistic Support Area Anaconda and Balad Air Base, Iraq.

Chapter 2 updates new literature and literature not reviewed by the writer during the prospectus stage of the project. Several key books were added to the writer's bibliography.

Chapter 3 provides an in-depth chronological summary of the project as it unfolded at Balad Air Base. The writer discusses thoroughly the incorporation of preaching themes predetermined before deployment.

Chapter 4 evaluates the theological reflection section of the prospectus as well as unrealized thematic material. Several new themes are discussed as being vital to effective preaching in a combat environment.

Chapter 5 incorporates a chronological evaluation by a group of hearers that were enlisted during the writer's deployment. Evaluation of sermonic style, content, and preparation are enumerated.

Chapter 6 discusses suggestions for further implementation of the project to include journal articles, books, and conferences that the writer seeks to develop.

Mark A. McDaniel, D.Min.
Advisor: Richard T. Vann Jr., Ph.D.
School of Theology
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009

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PREFACE

This ministry project is the culmination of twenty-five years of preparation. The writer began his service with the Air Force Corps in January of 1984. Years of maturing and development resulted in an intense four-month deployment to Iraq. The immensity of God's divine hand, purpose, and calling is profound. The incredible honor to serve our servicemen and women cannot be expressed in words. The writer is grateful to a sovereign God who equipped and sustained him throughout his tour of duty.

The role of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in the writer's professional and spiritual development has been paramount. Each class taken, whether at the graduate or post-graduate level, was realized in the sermons, counseling, and visitation performed at Balad Air Base. Without the language training received from Southwestern, the writer could not have exegeted and exposited the selected texts effectively.

Tremendous gratitude toward the writer's wife, Brandi, is extended. Her sacrifices during the writer's four-month absence from home were acute and challenging. Her steadfast love and support enabled the writer to minister effectively to others. Spouses of deployed military personnel are truly the unsung heroes of the Global War on Terror.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The writer deployed to Balad Air Base, Iraq,[1] during the fall and winter of

2005-2006. This deployment proved to be the most challenging situation ever faced by

the writer, as he entered into a combat zone for the first time in his military career. The

challenges were felt both personally and professionally. In addition to the ubiquitous

around-the-clock noise, the alien landscape had a profound effect. On the first night at

Balad Air Base, the writer experienced the first of fifty-six rocket and mortar attacks.[2]

This terrifying ordeal placed the writer in the first of many crises of belief[3] that would

stretch over the 120-day assignment. The reality of the situation immediately replaced the

writer's previous perceptions of deployment into a hostile environment and underscored

his belief that his ministry was vital to the men and women of the 332nd Air

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[1]According to GlobalSecurity.org, Balad Air Base is located in northern Iraq, approximately sixty-eight kilometers north of Baghdad. "Balad Air Base," [on-line]; accessed 15 December 2008; available from http://globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/balad-ab.htm; Internet.

[2]The writer compiled this statistic from his personal journal in which he tracked the number and types of attacks over the course of his deployment. Actual statistical information is classified. One can find an article reflective of how these types of attacks affect military personnel at "A Day at Balad," [on-line]; accessed 25 December 2008; available from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m01BP/is_/ai_n 6227801; Internet.

[3]This writer utilizes the terminology employed by Henry Blackaby in the book and Bible study, *Experiencing God*. Rocket attacks, the horrors of the military hospital, conducting Patriot Details, helping the morticians, responding to terrorist attacks, as well as the flood of family-related counseling, assaulted the writer's preconceived notions. In relation to the term, "crisis of belief," Blackaby writes, "The crisis of belief is a turning point or a fork in the road that demands that you make a decision. You must decide what you believe about God." Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 133.

Expeditionary Wing, as well as Logistical Support Area Anaconda. With the assignment

of both preaching responsibilities and unit visitation, the writer had an opportunity to

address the specific situations and experiences of military and civilian members deployed

during this crucial operation.[4]

Thesis

The writer's intention is that thematic and expositional preaching is essential to

meet the spiritual and emotional needs of servicemen and women assigned to a combat

environment.

Ministry Need

During the writer's twenty-five-year career[5] with the Air Force Chaplaincy

Service, both as a chaplain's assistant and chaplain, he has discovered that the pulpit is

the most neglected aspect of chaplaincy ministry. In recent years, the emphasis has been

on unit visitation, counseling, and human-centered approaches of worship. In a

number of personal conversations with fellow chaplains, they have ridiculed and

diminished the place of the sermon, biblical preaching, and exposition over and

against these more "meaningful" pursuits. In an age when the sufficiency of

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[4]"A military operation is the application of policy, management, and administrative principles in employment of military forces and resources in daily formation and unit activity to achieve a specific goal or objective." "Military Operation" [on-line]. Accessed 10 December 2008; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/military_operation.

[5]The writer entered active military service in November of 1983. He served nine years on active duty and transferred to the active reserves in December of 1992.

Scripture[6] and the place of biblical preaching[7] have come under assault,[8] it became more apparent to the writer that sermon preparation and the proper exposition[9] of Scripture is not only crucial in contemporary churches, but in the battle space as well.

With his assigned service, the writer would have sixteen opportunities to share meaningful passages of Scripture to a wide variety of military and civilian attendees. He did not view these opportunities casually. Rather, the writer viewed these services as a sacred event in which God could speak through Scripture to the spiritual and emotional needs of the listener.

In preparation for deployment, the writer contacted the senior chaplain at Balad and requested his advice. In relation to preaching, the senior chaplain instructed the writer to write his sermons before he arrived so there would be "no wasting time doing such things." This was an astonishing statement! Could a chaplain with no point-of-reference at that time completely develop a preaching trajectory that would meet

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[6]According to Grudem, "The sufficiency of scriptures means that scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly." Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Publishing, 1989), 126.

[7]Fasol defines biblical preaching as ". . . orally communicating truth as found in the Bible in a way that applies God's Word to life today." Al Fasol, *Essentials of Biblical Preaching: An Introduction to Basic Sermon Preparation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Publishers, 1989), 16.

[8]MacArthur illustrates this assault by quoting Robert Bratcher who addressed the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, ". . . only willful ignorance or intellectual dishonesty can account for the claim that the Bible is inerrant and infallible. . . ." John MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching: Balancing the Science and Art of Biblical Exposition* (Dallas: Word Publishers, 1992), 30. Further, Daniel Akin writes, "Seduced by the sirens of modernity we have jettisoned a word-based ministry that is expository in nature." Daniel Akin, "The Future of Southern Baptists: Mandates for What We Should Be," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9, no. 1 (2005): 74.

[9]Second Tim 3:16 and 4:2 lay the foundation and model for the exposition of Scripture. MacArthur, Piper, Broadus, Fasol, Blackwood, *et al.* provide a framework for approaching the biblical preaching task.

perceived needs? He could develop some themes, but several beyond the writer's current

anticipation would emerge over the course of the deployment.[10]

The stresses of deployment,[11] both to the military members and their

dependents at home, are quite pronounced. Multiple and protracted tours to combat

theaters provide numerous entry points in which the Word of God can lend solutions,

guidance, and direction. Oftentimes, innovations in technology[12] push family issues to the

forefront, producing a new range of stressors not faced in previous conflicts. In this

milieu, thoughtful preaching can deliver God's Word into the immediate environment.

Before deployment, the writer decided upon several themes as the most critical perceived

needs: the sovereignty of God, hope, endurance, comfort, obedience, holiness, salvation,

and the believer's purpose.

Ministry Description

The location of the project took place at the mammoth military base near

Balad, Iraq, approximately forty miles north of Baghdad, the capital of Iraq.

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[10]The chaplain meant for the writer to complete his sermons to the point of manuscripting the entire message. This rigidity would not allow for adjustments, modifications, and so forth upon his arrival on the base. The writer did collect a battery of themes and texts; however, exegesis and development of the text would not occur until his arrival in the theater.

[11]Illustrations of the effects of stress for combat deployments can be seen in the article, "Deployment Stress and OPERATION DESERT SHIELD," by Kathleen Wright. This article describes the stresses experienced by soldiers as they prepared for war. This study provided important data on soldiers' adaptation, morale, cohesion, family relationships, and concerns. Robert Joseph Ursano and Ann Norwood, eds., *Emotional Aftermath of the Persian Gulf War* (Washington: American Psychiatric Press, 1996), 283-314.

[12]In a January 12, 2006 article by NBC News reporter Babak Behman entitled, "Troops No Longer Phone Home," the writer describes the ubiquitous presence of internet cafés and the persistent connection to loved ones unheard of in previous conflicts. Babak Behman, "Troops No Longer Phone Home" [on-line]; accessed 2 December 2008; available from http://www.msnbc.com/id/10790652; Internet.

Encompassing twenty-four square miles, the base is the largest in Iraq, housing twenty-four thousand soldiers and three thousand airmen. The two runways and support facilities on this installation comprise Balad Air Base. Additionally, a contingent of sailors and Marines, as well as a large host of civilian contractors, live on this base. Tour lengths varied among the services and provided a constant turnover of personnel.

The context of the project would take place during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM,[13] a part of the broader Global War on Terrorism.[14] Begun in March of 2003, the prediction is for this operation to be the longest sustained conflict in American history. The operation has transformed from a conventional military invasion to a hostile insurgency, as well as a major Al-Qaeda[15] front of attack. The writer deployed during the transition from the Coalition Provisional Authority to an Interim Iraqi Government. Throughout the year of 2005, violence escalated across the country at an accelerated rate.[16] This transition proved to be very stressful to American military personnel struggling to understand and define their missions.

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[13]One can find an exceptional overview of the Iraqi conflict at Operation Iraqi Freedom [on-line]; accessed 8 December 2008; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Iraqi_Freedom #2003:_invasion; Internet.

[14]The term "Global War on Terrorism" is defined by the document, "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism" (February 2003) [on-line]; accessed 10 December 2008; available from http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/counter_terrorism/counter_terrorism_strategy.pdf; Internet.

[15]The history of Al-Qaeda is discussed in a background paper by the Council of Foreign Relations. Council of Foreign Relations, "Al-Qaeda" [on-line]; accessed 8 December 2008; available at http://www.cfr.org/publications/9126/; Internet.

[16]One can find charts depicting violence in Iraq from the invasion to the spring of 2008 presented by the Commander of the Multinational Forces Corps Commander, General David Petraeus, to the Senate Armed Services Committee in April of 2008 at Armed Services Senate [on-line]; accessed 3 December 2008; available from http://armed_services_senate.senate.gov/statement/2008/April/petraeus% 20Charts% 2004-08-08.pdf; Internet.

The writer deployed in support of 250 members of the 301st Fighter Wing, located at Naval Air Station, Joint Reserve Base, Fort Worth, Texas. For most members of the unit, this was the first true deployment into combat. Assigned to the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, these reservists performed aerial port, aircraft maintenance, and operational missions. The writer's assignment was to the chapel staff allotted to support the broader Air Force mission at Balad Air Base. The capability to secure ministry to the 332nd Maintenance Group ensured the writer the opportunity to minister directly to the members of his home unit. Additionally, leadership of the Sunday evening Protestant Worship Service came under the writer's duties. The writer found preaching opportunities in both of these venues.

The chaplain's daily life consisted of routine meals, administrative work, collegial interaction, and additional duties. The primary thrust of daily life involved unit visitation. After breakfast and dinner, three times each week, the writer journeyed to the workspaces of his assigned unit. During that time, he counseled and visited with airmen working on aircraft. This is perhaps the richest aspect of deployed chaplaincy ministry. After the evening meal, the chaplain remained at his office until bedtime, making himself available for counseling. This pattern continued for 120 days.

The primary venue for formal preaching was at the Sunday evening worship service. This service took place in the Tuskegee Chapel,[17] a large tent that provided space for one hundred worshippers. The chapel was in a central location in relation to the living

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[17]The 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, along with its component units, trace their heritage back to the vaunted all-black unit called the Tuskegee Airmen from World War II. More information about the historical roots of this unit can be found at Tuskegee Airmen [on-line]; accessed 29 November 2008; available from http://www.tuskegeeairmen.org; Internet.

and recreational quarters of the assigned Air Force personnel. The schedule allotted one hour for the service. In addition to the normal sequence of Scripture reading, worship, and the sermon, on the first Sunday of every month, the chaplains provided communion.

The writer found a second venue for preaching through unit visitation, official prayers, counseling, and interfacing with unit leadership. This venue proved to be quite challenging. The 332nd Maintenance Group worked twenty-four hours each day with two twelve-hour shifts. The unit's population included over one thousand maintainers. As the sole chaplain for such a large unit, maintaining continuous contact with as many personnel as possible was crucial. The writer is including this arena as a valid place for preaching, albeit not in a traditional manner. The Word of God would direct, inform, and answer individuals and groups in their work environment. As the statistics bore out over the deployment, only ten percent of the Air Force population attended the formal chapel services.[18] Because of this, a vibrant and continuous ministry of presence in the work centers, recreation areas, and formal gatherings of the unit was required.

Obstacles

The chief obstacle to this project would be the flexibility required by the writer in addressing the needs of the audience versus overemphasizing the needs of the preacher himself. In many ways, the writer's processing of the new environment intruded into the presentation of the sermons. An example of such an obstacle would be the writer's

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[18]In statistics kept by the enlisted chapel staff, out of 3,200 unit members assigned, an average of 320 personnel attended the weekly services offered by the Air Force. This figure is typical compared with other Air Force Chapel statistics. At Balad Air Base in the Fall of 2005, over fifty percent of wing members declared themselves as having "no religious preference," "other," or of a non-Christian faith.

reaction to experiencing attacks personally. Twice during the deployment, the enemy launched mortar attacks at the exact time the service was to begin. In response, the writer's preaching and pastoral prayers tended to be imprecatory[19] in tone and nature. This response clouded an incredible opportunity to explore more Christ-like responses to violence and war.[20]

The writer's limited exposure to the wider military culture proved to be a second obstacle. Acute differences exist in methodology and application of force between the different branches of the service. Further, conflicts between reserve and active duty forces proved challenging to overcome in such a short span of deployment. Every work center and group experienced the war in Iraq from a different perspective. Early in the rotation, the writer had to grasp these unique perspectives in order for him to resonate with the varied spiritual and emotional needs in the sermon. Help in this regard came from the writer's chaplaincy supervisor, Chaplain Carl Wright. By the midpoint of the deployment, his contributions and insight proved sufficient to mitigate this obstacle.

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[19]An imprecatory Psalm is one where the writer pleads with God to curse or destroy his enemies. Such imprecations are Pss 55:15, 58:6, 69:28, 109:9, 137:9, *et al*.

[20]In Matt 5:44, both "love (ἀγαπᾶτε)" and "pray (προσεύχεσθε)" are in the imperative and call for individuals to live rightly with those who persecute, harass, and pursue (διωκόντων) and are "enemies (ἐχθροὺς)" to the believer. Martin Luther states, "For a Christian is the kind of man who knows no hatred or hostility against anyone at all, whose heart is neither angry nor vindictive, but only loving, mild, and helpful." Martin Luther, *The Sermon on the Mount and the Magnificat*, Luther's Works, vol. 21, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999, c1956), 21:119.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section contains literature discovered by the writer since the writing of his

prospectus, and augments the corpus of material germane to the writer's topic. Since the

prospectus's approval in 2007, the writer found no new dissertations, articles, or books

about the role of preaching, preparation of sermons, or the importance of the Bible in the

military environment. Each of these additional titles provides meaningful resources to the

deploying chaplain during a time of war.

The book, *When God Says War Is Right*,[1] provides the reader with a brief

primer on the concept and application of the "Just War Doctrine."[2] The text focuses on

the ideas of reconciling the character of God with the use of force; determining when and

how Christians ought to fight; understanding why Christian virtues are vital when using

force; learning lessons from World War II, Vietnam, and the Gulf War; and responding to

today's war on terrorism. Whether chaplains or civilian clergy with military populations

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[1] Darrell Cole, *When God Says War Is Right: The Christian's Perspective on When and How to Fight* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2002).

[2] The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides four rationales for a nation to begin a war: "(1) The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain; (2) All other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective; (3) There must be serious prospects of success; (4) The use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated." *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 555.

in their churches, this book is an excellent resource for those preaching to members of the military.

Cole's analysis of World War II, Vietnam, and the Gulf War in relation to the principles of just war is of particular note. Whether discussing the saturation bombing of Nazi Germany, dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan, the Mi Lai massacre in Vietnam, or how the United States entered into a war with Iraq in the early 1990s, the author deftly handles application of a just war theory to conflict.

In *Grace Under Fire*,[3] Andrew Carroll provides invaluable insight of the effect of combat deployment as it relates to faith and family life. Through a catalog of letters stretching from the American Revolution through the Global War on Terrorism, Carroll touchingly relates correspondence between military members and their loved ones. Through these letters, one can gain thematic material by which to construct a preaching trajectory that is biblical and relevant to the spiritual needs of combat military personnel. Of particular interest is a series of letters from a chaplain to his home parish during his deployment to Vietnam.

The book, *While God is Marching On*,[4] discusses the spiritual context of Civil War soldiers. Woodworth begins his work with the masterful provision of several themes that governed the lives of Union and Confederate soldiers. Although contextual, the section provides wonderful thematic material for chaplains. These themes include the

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[3]Andrew Carroll, *Grace Under Fire: Letters of Faith in Times of War* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2007).

[4]Steven Woodworth, *While God Is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001).

actions of a Sovereign God, the life to come, the way of salvation, and the Christian life.

His chapter on Civil War chaplains is quite educational, enumerating both good and bad

qualities of chaplains throughout the war. The reader can gain tremendous thematic

material from this work.

In *Confederate Chaplain: A War Journal*,[5] Confederate Chaplain James

Sheeran provides the reader an invaluable glimpse of an army at war from a chaplain's

perspective. This book contains his entire war journal from 1862 to 1865. A most

enlightening book, the diary entries lend the reader a feel of daily Army life and

interaction with the common soldier, as well as interaction with superior officers.

Delivering a wealth of combat-related themes for the modern chaplain, Chaplain Sheeran

describes various ethical, military, and spiritual needs within the Army. In several

instances, one finds the chaplain admonishing the officers of his division in prophetic

fashion.

In *Soldiers of the Cross*,[6] the author describes the impact of the Civil War on

the lives of Christians who served in the Confederate Army. This book provides a

compelling look at how these soldiers viewed several aspects of the Civil War. The

chapter concerning justification of war and steadfastness in faith would be particularly

helpful to the chaplain. In stressing the spiritual aspect of the conflict, one can give

tremendous strength to soldiers or airmen, much as connecting the just cause of the

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[5]Joseph Durkin, ed., *Confederate Chaplain: A War Journal* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1960).

[6]Kent Dollar, *Soldiers of the Cross: Confederate Soldier--Christians and the Impact of War on Their Faith* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005).

southerner's cause strengthened them. Additionally, a strong treatment of the topic of

spiritual development in the soldier is particularly useful.

The book, *Chaplains in Gray*,[7] provides an illuminating study of the

Confederate chaplaincy. The book gives a picture of the chaplain and other religious

workers in their relations with the soldiers of the Confederate Army. Each chapter deals

with the various roles of the Army chaplain and provides meaningful guidelines for

current chaplains. Two chapters deal with the topic of this project report: "In the Day of

Battle" and "As Ye Go, Preach." The first chapter outlines the importance of the

chaplain's example and influence. The second chapter focuses on the importance of

preaching on the battlefield and the impact of sermons upon the average soldier. The

author sprinkles preaching themes throughout this valuable chapter.

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[7]Charles Pitts, *Chaplains in Gray: The Confederate Chaplains' Story* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1957).

CHAPTER 3

PROJECT SUMMARY

Preparation for this deployment began well before the writer landed in Iraq on

September 3, 2005. In relation to his preaching plan, the writer understood that, more

than likely, he would lead one of three Protestant, or non-Catholic services that the Air

Force offers for deployed members. He solidified this plan after the assembling of the

new chaplain service staff and assignment of the various responsibilities. Acting upon the

possibility, the writer began to formulate his preaching plan as stipulated in the

prospectus. *A Table in the Presence*[1] was of particular help in developing this plan.

Throughout the book, Chaplain Carey Cash sprinkled several texts that he utilized to

minister effectively to his Marines. The writer was able to draw upon these and others to

set up a tentative trajectory of preaching that would equip believers and proclaim aspects

of the Good News to any unbelievers who might attend the writer's service. The writer

evoked much prayer in order to secure a service by which he could augment unit

visitation with a pulpit ministry.

Travel to Iraq commenced on August 31, 2005, when the writer arrived in

Norfolk, Virginia, in wait of transport to Balad, Iraq. Due to many mechanical failures,

the aircraft did not leave until September 2. This extra time allowed the writer to solidify

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[1]Carey Cash, *A Table in the Presence* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2004).

his goals and ambitions for the ensuing four months of ministry, including repeatedly mulling over the texts that he planned to utilize during the deployment. The airplane departed for Al Udied Air Base, in Qatar, a small peninsula off the north coast of Saudi Arabia. This forward deployment installation was the final stop before Balad Air Base. This installation, at the end of the deployment, would prove to be a valuable place of personal ministry, encouragement, and healing during the writer's transition back to civilian life.

At 8:30 a.m., the C-130 carrying the writer and two hundred other airmen landed at the base dubbed "Mortaritaville,"[2] due to the persistent rocket and mortar attacks by Al-Qaeda and Sunni Arab insurgents. Upon disembarking the aircraft, the writer considered "paradigm shift"[3] an understatement. The environment at Balad Air Base, Iraq was incredibly alien and invasive. The heat (100 degrees by mid-morning), the smell, the barbed wire, the smoke, and the persistent noise combined to overwhelm the writer's senses and spirit. In addition to jetlag, the shock of leaving civilization for a third-world country in war provided an unnerving experience for the writer. The experience truly had begun!

On the evening of September 3, the surroundings threw the writer into the first of many crises of belief that he would experience over the next 120 days of ministry. Around 9:00 p.m., alarm claxons sounded, indicating an incoming rocket or mortar

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[2]"Balad Air Base" [on-line]; accessed 10 October 2008; available from http://www.global security.org/military/world/iraq/balad-ab.htm; Internet.

[3]Originated with Thomas Kuhn who wrote, ". . . a [paradigm shift] occurs when scientists encounter anomalies which cannot be explained by the universally accepted paradigm within which scientific progress has thereto been made." Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 23.

attack. The attack signal was the same as a tornado siren utilized back in Texas. The writer put on his protective gear--a helmet and flak vest, or Individual Body Armor (IBA). Lying upon the floor, curled up in a ball, the writer listened as the sound of explosions sounded in the distance. The attack affected the writer deeply.

Beginning to cry, the writer called out to the Lord, "What am I doing here?" Alone and unsure as to whether or not the writer would survive 119 more days of this environment, a decision had to be made. The writer was reminded of all that he had learned from Henry Blackaby's remarkable work, *Experiencing God*,[4] as well as stories from the Bible which underscored the truths of a Sovereign God.[5] The writer concluded, affirmed in his faith, that if he was where God wanted him to be, then God would sustain him.[6] In effect, this was the first sermon preached by the writer in Iraq--the one to himself. Getting up off the floor when the "all-clear" signal sounded, the writer dusted himself off, took a deep breath, and resolved to pursue the next four months with vigor and assurance. Not until the end of the deployment would the writer experience this type of crisis again.

On Sunday, September 4, the writer attended all three of the Protestant services, orienting himself to the different types of services the Air Force offered. An early morning service at the Base Hospital provided service for liturgical Christians. The late morning service, the largest of the three, geared specifically for younger airmen and

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[4]Blackaby, *Experiencing God*.

[5]Such as the story of Joseph from Gen 37-50, *et al.*

[6]Ps 91 is an unofficially adopted Psalm for the military and provides much strength and encouragement. "Ps 91" [on-line]; accessed 30 November 2008; available from http://www.military familiespray.com/index.php?id=19; Internet.

soldiers, had a contemporary flavor. The evening service, to which the writer hoped to gain assignment, centered on a more traditional, nonliturgical audience. Stepping into this service was an incredible experience. The next sixteen Sundays brought a lifetime of preparation to fruition. Sitting in this service, the writer prayed that God would speak mightily through him. Consecration and anticipation for service was incredibly keen that evening. As hoped, his superiors soon granted the writer the pastorate of the 1730 Traditional Worship service at Balad Air Base, Iraq for the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing.

In addition to preaching responsibilities, one of the writer's assignments was unit visitation for the 332nd Maintenance Group. Containing over one thousand members, reserve and active duty, the men and women who maintained the F-16 fighter jets and Predator unmanned aerial vehicles provided a tremendous opportunity over the ensuing deployment. The writer developed and maintained key relationships, which enabled ministry and preaching of a different kind. Visitation and counseling provided an opportunity for the writer to put into practice what he preached at the Sunday evening services. The realization of this truth occupied much of the substance of his ensuing sermons and encouragement for each congregant to "preach" the sermons heard in their work-centers, as well as the sermons spoken through their lives, examples, and words.

Psalm 23

September 11, 2005 (the fourth anniversary of the attacks on New York City and the Pentagon) realized the writer's inaugural sermon at Balad Air Base. The service

incorporated several elements to augment the message. The call to worship was a responsive reading from Ps 118, focusing on God's providential care[7] for the faithful.[8] In addition to a vibrant worship set of five songs, the writer showed a remembrance video of the attacks on September 11, 2001, focusing on the idea of why the soldiers fight and why they deploy to fight in Iraq. Following pastoral prayer for individual expressed needs, Ps 23 was read and exposited.

In verse one, the writer sought to stress the importance of the covenant nature of God,[9] especially as it relates to the aspect of Him as shepherd.[10] The writer pointed out that the remainder of the Psalm illustrates exactly how Yahweh shepherds His people.[11] The writer enumerated twelve aspects of what shepherds do exactly, and stressed that one could see these elements in the remaining five verses.

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[7]Samuel Terrien states, "Ovine nature appears even when the psalmist implies that a constant and attentive providence is needed to overcome the strange complexity of human nature." Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*, Critical Eerdmans Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 239.

[8]"The LORD is on my side" (vs. 6); "The LORD is my helper" (vs. 7); and "The LORD is my strength and my song" (vs. 14).

[9]יְהֹוָה--The divine name of God, connected with both the Abrahamic (Gen 12:1-3) and Mosaic (Ex 3) covenants. Speaking of God's eternal nature, Douglas Stuart states, "What had just been revealed [to Moses] in terms of the divine name was now reiterated [in Ex 3:15] with connection to the patriarchs, so that the Israelites in Egypt would be able properly to draw the conclusion that Moses was not coming to them in the name of a new god, but the true God." Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2007), 2:122.

[10]רֹעִי--Meaning to pasture, tend, or graze. William White, in his contribution to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, writes, ". . . from antiquity, rulers were described as demonstrating their legitimacy to rule by their ability to 'pasture' their people." Bruce Waltke, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 853. James Mays states, "In the ancient Near East the role and title of shepherd were used for leaders as a designation of their relation to the people in their charge. As a title, 'shepherd' came to have specific royal connotation." James L. Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation Commentary Series (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 117.

[11]Samuel Terrien writes, "Yahweh, respectful of his name, is a model of fairness and fidelity, the mirror of his promise to maintain the covenant." Terrien, *Psalms*, 240.

In verse two, the preacher sought to incorporate Hebrew verbal ideas in discussing the first description of how God shepherds His people. This Psalm uses rare Hebrew verbal structures[12] throughout, pointing to emphasis beyond normal verbs. In verse two, one finds Yahweh "causing" David to lie down in green pastures[13] and intensively leading him beside still waters.[14] The writer sought to emphasize that this was true for the congregants in how God "caused" the sending of each of them to Iraq and made them to lie down in the place of God's choosing. This focused on the truth of God's providential[15] direction over His own people.

In verse three, the writer stressed the intensive nature of how Yahweh restored[16] (or facilitated repentance through discipline and judgment) David back to the

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[12]According to Gary Pratico and Miles Van Pelt, "of the almost 72,000 verbs in the Hebrew Bible, over two thirds (50,669) occur in the Qal, or simple action, stem." Further, an average of three verbs per Hebrew verse exists. This means that when one utilizes one of the other six Hebrew verb stems, emphasis on the verbal action is implied. Gary D. Pratico and Miles Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2001), 121, 138.

[13]This verse utilizes two unique verbs--the Hiphil Active, "makes me lie down," and Piel Active, "He really leads me," stressing the point that the Shepherd God is involved actively in the psalmist's current situation. Further, Luther writes, "At this point David would also say that God had shown him no greater grace and blessing on earth than this, that he was permitted to be at a place and among people where God's Word and dwelling place and the right worship were to be found." Martin Luther, *Selected Psalms I*, Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c1955, 1999), 12:160.

[14]The phrase here switches from the active to a Piel Imperfect, indicating the fact that the action is incomplete, "whether in the past, present, or future" (Pratico, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew*, 165), indicating God's continued activity. Bratcher states, "This is not a stagnant pool, but a place where the fresh water flows gently, making it easy for the sheep to drink it. In some languages, this is 'streams of fresh water' or 'rivers with good water'." Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reyburn, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms, Helps for Translators* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 232.

[15]Derek Thomas describes providence as "the doctrine insists that everything that happens does so because God wills it to happen, wills it to happen before it happens, wills it to happen in the way that it happens." Derek H. Thomas, *What is Providence?* Basics of the Reformed Faith Series (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2008), 5.

[16]יְשׁוֹבֵב--Here restore is in the Polel, Imperfect, indicating both passive and incomplete action. This indicates that David is not the source of determining when he is in the right or in the wrong. Only

paths of righteousness.[17] This truth points to the notion that God does not tolerate for long

believers not walking in the direction that they should. God shows an active interest in

doing this, not for the believer's benefit, but for the sake of His renowned, glory, and

reputation--the main thought behind "name's sake."[18] The writer emphasized that the

congregants were in Iraq, not for their own benefit, but for God's glory, and that God will

maintain His glory among the heathen.[19]

In verse four, the writer sought to convey that Yahweh sometimes leads His

people through the darkest of situations.[20] This point particularly was relevant to the

congregants. For many, this deployment was a difficult separation from their families.

Although voluntary for many on the reserve side, active-duty units were given a tasking,

requiring that a certain number of airmen or soldiers be sent to Iraq. Given the violent

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God's leadership and prompting can illuminate and convict the soul. Kiel and Delitzsch state that "restore" "signifies to bring back the soul that is as it were flown away, so that it comes to itself again, therefore to impart new life, *recreare.* This He does to the soul, by causing it amidst the dryness and heat of temptation and trouble, to taste the very essence of life, which refreshes and strengthens it." Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 5:208.

[17]בְמַעְגְּלֵי־צֶּדֶק. Literally, straight or right paths leading toward a goal (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 5:208).

[18]John Piper writes, "My conclusion is that God's own glory is uppermost in His own affections. In everything He does, His purpose is to preserve and display that glory. To say that His own glory is uppermost in His own affections means that He puts a greater value on it than on anything else. He delights in His glory above all things." John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 41.

[19]In Exod 20:5-9, God declares that He acted on behalf of the Israelites in bondage in Egypt for the sake of His own name. Exod 14:6, 8; 20:21-22, Ps 106:6-8, *et al* echo this.

[20]נֶגֶד צֹרְרָי. The traditional approach in preaching this concept relates strictly to death; however, this clause points to a more varied meaning. Niehr (G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975, 12:398]) promotes the idea that here the Psalmist refers to "valley of gloomy darkness." Job 16:6 states that Job's face is red with weeping and that "darkness" is on his eyelids," pointing to the fact

nature of their new environment, the preacher sought to encourage them regarding his

own struggles about being in this land. This transparency became an important strategy in

the writer's preaching over the ensuing weeks. Verse four imparts an important truth that,

even if God leads the believer into the very shadows of darkness,[21] He never leaves them

alone. Further, verse four utilizes another intensive verb (Piel) to stress that God's rod of

correction and staff of protection are present constantly to provide compassion and

consolation[22] in the worst of situations.

Verse five continues the thought of verse four by utilizing a beautiful picture

of a table being set up in the presence of David's enemies.[23] Particularly moving in

its incredible description of how God's table of fellowship can draw the focus away

from indomitable darkness,[24] the picture of God anointing[25] the believer and

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that David is not facing death, but is in deep anguish. At Balad Air Base, the congregants encountered death around them, but never to them; however, they did face fear, depression, traumatic stress, etc.

[21]Craigie writes, "The meaning of the expression 'the valley of death's shadow' (v. 4) poses some difficulty. The Hebrew may be understood properly as a compound noun, with the literal sense 'very deep shadow', or even 'total darkness'. As such, it is not only a part of the metaphor of the shepherd, but again has associations with the Exodus and the wandering through the 'deep shadow' of the wilderness. But the expression may have been used deliberately to convey the threat of death, as is done in the poetry of Job." Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19, ed. Ralph P. Martin (Dallas: Word, 2002), 207.

[22]יְנַחֲמֻנִי. Hosea 11:8 states, "How can I give you up, O Ephraim, How can I hand you over O Israel. . . . My heart recoils within me; my compassion [comfort] grows warm and tender."

[23]Since Yahweh is the host, the presence of the psalmist's *enemies* is no threat to him; he is under Yahweh's protection and care. Bratcher and Reyburn, *Translator's Handbook*, 234.

[24]Luther states, "When one has the Word and in faith clings to it firmly, these enemies, who otherwise are invincible, must all yield and let themselves be taken captive." Luther, *Selected Psalms I*, 12:173.

[25]דִּשַּׁנְתָּ--Again, the Piel points to an intense anointing.

saturating[26] him or her with his provision is a powerful reminder of the blessings that God provides when believers submit to God's sovereignty. The writer used the worship service to illustrate how God knew that each of the listeners would be in Iraq in September of 2005, and how He began many years ago to provide a preacher to remind them of this great truth at the beginning of their deployments.[27]

The fellowship of believers proved to be an important part of their deployment, and they needed to be committed to attendance in order to receive God's provision for their needs. This concept further underscores the importance of exegetical and expositional preaching. Preachers are not in a pulpit for their own benefit, but as a part of God's sovereign plan to saturate the people of God with truth as a part of His promise to provide for their needs, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

Verse six concludes this masterful Psalm with the truth that God's goodness and mercy shall follow, or rather, pursue with the intent of overtaking[28] the child of God. The writer stressed this powerful idea in that each listener was not to worry about whether God had forgotten them in a desolate and violent place--indeed, God was on

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[26]In William White's contribution to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, he points out that רְוָיָה is used in highly poetic contexts, occurring only two places in the Psalms--here and in vs. 66:12. The noun is formed from the Hiphil stem pointing to active causation (Pratico and Van Pelt, *Biblical Hebrew*, 345). Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 835.

[27]The flow of the verbs highlights this notion. Verse five flows from present activity, "prepare a table (Qal, Imperfect)" and "presence of mine enemies (Qal, Active, Participle)" to an odd construction, "anoint my head (Piel, Perfect)." In essence, the anointing is completed action from the past with continued effect providing the stability the believer needs when dealing with unceasing assault by circumstances and individuals bent on destroying them.

[28]This is the actual meaning of יִרְדְּפוּנִי. In English, follow seems to indicate a reactive God, plodding along behind, tossing out goodness and mercy. In Hebrew, a more intentional God is pursuing the believer constantly intending, to the point of persecution, to overflow him or her with his goodness and mercy.

their very heels, continuing His shepherding of them through the distribution of His

goodness and mercies. The verse concludes with the promise that, in the end, no matter

what might occur, the believer will find a place to dwell[29] in the House of God. The

writer used this concept to strengthen in the souls of the congregants that, even if they

might die or become injured--the greatest fears at Balad Air Base, their home was in the

bosom of God.[30]

They could conclude, as the writer had done days before, that they did not have

to spend their time in worry and concern, but in focusing on the purpose of why God had

placed them on the base--a future theme that the writer espoused in a later sermon. The

writer concluded the sermon with this statement from John Calvin:

> But when once the light of Divine Providence has illuminated the believer's soul,
> he is relieved and set free, not only from the extreme fear and anxiety, which
> formerly oppressed him, but from all care. For as he justly shudders at the idea of
> chance, so he can confidently commit himself to God. This, I say, is his comfort,
> that his heavenly Father so embraces all things under his power--so governs them at
> will by his nod--so regulates them by his wisdom, that nothing takes place save
> according to his appointment; that received into his favor, and entrusted to the care
> of his angels neither fire, nor water, nor sword, can do him harm, except in so far as
> God their master is pleased to permit.[31]

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[29]Samuel Terrien states, "This masterpiece may well have concluded with the hope of life eternal, not through the static anthropology of the immortality of the soul but on account of a most intimate communion with the eternal Yahweh." Terrien, *Psalms*, 243.

[30]While the term means house in a structural sense, a more meaningful idea points to a place of refuge, which is what the psalmist intended to convey. To the deployed military member, home and family are integral components of spiritual and emotional health. A house is merely lumbar, brick, and mortar. A home is a place of warmth, consolation, and protection. When a small child is hurt, he or she runs to his or her father to hold them and comfort them. In a sense, the house of Yahweh is seen as this type of place in light of Ps 23. In Luke 16:22, Jesus' usage of the term "bosom of Abraham" further illustrates this imagery.

[31]Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [Institutio Christianae Religionis] [reprint ed., with new introd., originally published: Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845-1846] (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 1:xvii, 11.

Psalm 42

The writer preached the second sermon of this project on September 18, 2005.

During the previous week, the writer became oriented to the base and conducted initial

unit visitation with the maintenance group. The objective of the sermon was that the

hearer would develop a deep desire for God regardless of the circumstances. The service

itself followed the same order as the previous week and continued to do so for the

remainder of the project--opening prayer, responsive reading, worship, pastoral prayer,

and then the message. This Psalm opens with a declaration of having a deep desire for

God and develops further with answering the question as to whether or not that desire can

survive the darkest situations that the believer can encounter.

In verse two, David states that he is thirsty[32] for God completely and utterly.

The imagery of these opening verses struck deeply with the congregants as the

temperatures averaged around 115 degrees[33] for the first half of the tour. These extreme

temperatures, coupled with having to wear fifty pounds of protective gear, intensified

everyone's thirst. Each person assigned to the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing was

required to drink around twelve liters of water each day. Thirst was on everyone's mind.

The powerful imagery of verse two connected well and pointed to the only place that one

can find satisfaction--in God's presence. David underscored this point throughout the

remainder of the Psalm, describing various negative circumstances.

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[32]This is indicated by the Qal, Active, Perfect form. One sees this type of thirst in Isa 41:17. Jer 2:13 states the end result of people who seek to satisfy their thirst in their own way, "they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

[33]City Weather Guide [on-line]; accessed 20 November 2008; available from http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/world/city_guides/results.shtml?tt=TT002400; Internet.

In verse three, David proclaims that his tears[34] have been his only nourishment day and night. He cries out "Where is thy God?" The writer pointed to St. John of the Cross's *The Dark Night of the Soul*,[35] to describe how God sometimes leads believers to a point of devastation and emptiness in order for the believer to grow more deeply in God. David rightly prefaces these examples of extreme situations with the answer to the dark night, echoed by St. John of the Cross, being God himself.

In verses four through eight, David calls for determination and endurance in the faith despite temporal emotions and feelings. In verse four, David discloses that, at one time, he had gone with the multitude to the House of God,[36] but at a point, he had ceased to go.[37] The preacher here stressed the fact that distancing oneself from God provides the environment from which the enemy can begin his devilish work of tempting the believer to isolate oneself, thereby sowing the seeds of depression. David reminds himself that one way that he can overcome his dark night of the soul is once again to return to present himself before the Ark of the Covenant--God's very presence.[38]

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[34]דִּמְעָתִי. Usually occurs in the context of weeping or lamenting, cf. Jer 9:1. Twice the usage indicates tears as food here, and in Ps 80:5, "given them tears to drink in full measure."

[35]St. John of the Cross, "Dark Night of the Soul" [on-line]; accessed 1 December 2008; available from http://www.ccel.org/ccel/john_cross/dark_night.i.html; Internet. This edition is produced electronically from an uncopyrighted copy of the 1959 edition from Image Books.

[36]Samuel Terrien remarks, "The sense of spiritual abandonment or of mystical void is made even more acute by a nostalgia for the grand ceremonies of long ago." Terrien, *Psalms*, 352.

[37]Hence, the question in verse two, "When shall I come and appear before God?"

[38]As seen in Exod 25:22, "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat" (also, compare with Lev 16:2). David's connection with the Ark of the Covenant was strong, as evidenced when he escorted the Ark into Jerusalem in 2 Sam 6:13-15.

In verse five, David asks himself why his soul is cast down.[39] This phrase is an

intensive action with a reflexive voice,[40] meaning a definite connection between David's

heart and the circumstances surrounding him. This verse states that being downcast or

depressed is a choice to allow circumstances to influence a person's state-of-being. The

word itself means to dig a pit[41]--leading to the metaphor of a person digging his or her

own pit of destruction, isolation, corruption, death, and burial. The answer David

provides is the biblical theme of hope. The writer stressed to the congregants that biblical

hope is a confident expectation[42] of a certain conclusion found only in God's sovereign

design and will for the believer's life.

In verse six, David provides that path for coming out of the pit through the

remembrance of God and His past activity in David's life. David is discouraged in this

Psalm, because he is far from what was familiar and dear. He was far from Jerusalem and

Mount Zion where the Ark of the Covenant was located.[43] David's remembrances of

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[39]תִּשְׁתּוֹחֲחִי--Victor Hamilton writes, "low or abased . . . dejected . . . weak." Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 915.

[40]Pratico and Van Pelt write concerning the Hithpael, "The reflexive voice is used when the subject of the verb performs the verbal action upon itself. Pratico and Van Pelt, *Biblical Hebrew*, 384.

[41]Jer 18:20 utilizes this word as someone who digs a pit for another. The word carries with it connotations of sinking down and subsiding, even unto the depths of Sheol. Wilhelm Gesenius and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, Translation of the Author's Lexicon Manuale Hebraicum Et Chaldaicum in Veteris Testamenti Libros, a Latin Version of the Work First Published in 1810-1812 Under Title: Hebräisch-Deutsches Handwörterbuch Des Alten Testaments; Includes Index (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2003), 810.

[42]This is the biblical meaning of both ἐλπίς and קִוֵּיתִי.

[43]The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* states, "The mountainous region in the tribe of Dan refers to the place from which he prayed. He apparently was miles north of the Sea of Kinnereth (Galilee). Yet he longed to be not on Mount Mizar (a peak in the Mount Hermon range) but on Mount Zion." John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary, *Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 1:825.

God's work and activities in the life of Israel were all he possessed. The preacher here

pointed to the fact that all in the worship service were far from their familiar homes and

churches. He stressed that gathering together in order not to be isolated and discouraged

was important. With twelve-hour shifts six days a week, the temptation for many was to

spend their day off in an activity other than a worship service. This was born out in the

fact that, out of three thousand assigned personnel, only ten percent attended both

Catholic and Protestant services combined during the deployment. The writer believes

that this disconnect from God led to a phenomenal counseling load[44] encountered by all

of the assigned chaplains.

Verse seven describes troubles like waves cascading down on David as if he

were standing under a waterfall.[45] He compared the noise of the waves with his troubles,

which he personified, calling them to come and overwhelm him--in essence like a flood.

The twenty-first century Air Force is equipped with the most current technological

advances known to humankind. This fact allowed many airmen and soldiers to be in

constant contact with their loved ones and families back home. In some ways, this was a

blessing.

The writer's own father[46] deployed to Vietnam for two year-long tours. His

only method for contact with his family was to write letters. With mail moving slowly,

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[44]The writer completed 373 counseling sessions over the course of his deployment. Counseling and visitation consumed much of an average workday.

[45]Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Volumes 1-4 Combined in One Electronic Edition (Leiden; New York: E. J. Brill, 1999, c1994-1996), 1038.

[46]Senior Master Sergeant Alvin W. McDaniel. He completed his thirty-two year Army Air Corps/Air Force Career with two voluntary tours to Vietnam.

his only focus was on his job in the war and the combat with which he was involved. In

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, daily (sometimes hourly) contact with family through

telephone and e-mail capability brought stressors home to the battlefield. This cascading

cacophony of problems and troubles overwhelmed many during the deployment. The

chapel offices were located next to the tent set up with phone banks. Many evenings, the

writer was inundated with airmen leaving the phone tent to come to the chapel office to

talk with a chaplain about a problem at home.[47] The writer used the truths of this Psalm to

counsel many troubled airmen.

Verse eight brings David back to a word of declaration, despite these enormous

obstacles. David chooses to resume his relational activities of continuous praise and

exaltation of God, despite the horrible circumstances that surround him.[48] This verse uses

intensive verbs to underscore that God will establish (Piel) his lovingkindnesses,[49]

lending strength to believers to endure the darkness that surrounds them. The writer

encouraged the attendees that the mark of a true believer is not just praising or exalting

God during the day when God's loving care is evident, but praising or exalting God

during the "dark nights" of the soul also.

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[47]Of particular note was Airman First Class David Pinkoski. This eighteen-year-old airman was assigned "gun-truck" duty where he manned a .50 caliber machine gun on top of an armored personnel carrier. His job was to perform convoy duty to protect the countless commercial vehicles, which supplied the various bases throughout Iraq. This individual came to the writer for counseling every night throughout the deployment.

[48]Walter Kaiser suggests that night here refers to a time of trial, weeping, suffering, and communion with God. However, even though the darkness is horrible to the believer, night is as day to a Sovereign God (Ps 139:11-12). Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 478.

[49]The English Standard Version (ESV) states, "the LORD commands his steadfast love."

In verses nine through ten, the Psalm finds David once again falling back into depression and despair. This truth underscores how believers quickly forget God's promises. As David's enemies pursued him in this Psalm, the writer contextualized this with the congregants concerning those outside of the gate of the installation who were daily trying to kill as many Americans as possible through mortar attacks. When they could not accomplish this goal, a secondary strategy was to demoralize the airmen and soldiers. In the same way, the believer's spiritual enemy--the devil, seeks to perpetrate the same harm.[50] David responds to this extreme threat by pointing the believer once again to have a confident expectation in God and His sovereign care over all of his people.

Genesis 12:2-3

The third sermon of the deployment occurred on September 25, 2005. Leading up to the service, the writer spent the week observing how many civilian foreign nationals were working on the installation to provide basic services for American military personnel. Persians, Iraqis, Filipinos, Samoans, Indians, Pakistanis, and Turks worked in and among all, serving and preparing food, doing laundry, ironing uniforms, cleaning restrooms, and performing construction on the installation. The writer sought to emphasize the central truth of the Abrahamic Covenant--to be a blessing to the nations.

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[50]1 Pet 5:8.

Verse two deals clearly with these two concepts. First, God is the one that causes[51] the blessings and greatness in Abraham.[52] Abraham can do nothing to increase or decrease the level of God's blessings, or to make His own name powerful or great. In essence, God chose to pour out His grace upon Abraham and his descendents--not only for their own benefit, but also for the benefit of all other families and people groups on the earth. Second, God desires to reach all nations with His great love and compassion, and His people are to accomplish that mission. God initiated Abraham's choosing--not to create a position for Abraham, but to create a purpose for Abraham.[53]

Sadly, many soldiers and airman at the installation treated the "third country nationals," as they were called, with disdain, discourtesy, and disrespect. The writer witnessed one of these incidents firsthand during that particular week. An Army soldier treated a Pakistani man in the dining facility harshly as the man was serving food to the soldier. The writer approached this soldier and reprimanded him. In the message, the writer sought to point out to the listeners that these unconverted people were present for them to bless and not curse, as this soldier had done. Although the American military was in Iraq to prosecute a war, a greater battle was raging in the spiritual arena. The sermon concluded with an exhortation to focus on the purpose for which God had sent them to Iraq--living in service and blessing to others.

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[51]"I will (Qal Active) make of you a great nation," and "I will (Piel Active) really bless you" point to God's primary agency in Israel's function and purpose.

[52]Kenneth Matthews writes, "Abram has no exclusive claim on God's blessing; rather, God has exclusive claim on Abram and on all those who submit to his God." Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 115.

[53]". . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3).

The Roman Road (Romans 3:23; 5:8;
6:23; 9-10; and 10:13)

The writer preached the fourth sermon in this project on October 2, 2005. The

Air Force chapel service reserves the first Sunday of every month for communion.

Because the writer belongs to a church and a denomination, the World Baptist

Fellowship, that holds to a belief that one is to administer the ordinances solely at a local

church of Baptists, he had to secure a special dispensation in order to perform the Lord's

Supper and baptism in a combat environment. The writer's home church and mission

agency offered this permission gladly. What an honor to be able to perform the Lord's

Supper in Iraq!

The writer believed it necessary to present a clear message before delivering

the ordinance, that the table of communion was indeed the Lord's Table and only those

who truly had received Him as Lord and Savior were to partake. This was accomplished

through a brief presentation of the verses that have been known historically as the

"Roman Road of Salvation."[54] The writer strove to present a simple and straightforward

presentation of the Gospel to the congregation. The message ended with an invitation for

those who had not appropriated the wonderful work of atonement[55] by Jesus Christ to

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[54]Timothy P. Johnston analyzes various historical traditions of presenting the Gospel, specifically comparing and contrasting the Roman Road model with Erasmus and Rick Warren. Timothy Johnstone, "Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life* (2003) and Erasmus' *Enchiridion (1503): Comparing Approaches in Apologetic Evangelism*," *Trinity Journal* 25, no. 2 (2006): 178-81.

[55]Rom 3:21-25. Schreiner states, "δικαιούμενοι (being justified, v. 24) and δικαιοῦντα (the one who justifies, v. 26) indicate that believers are in a right relation with God through the death of Christ. Vindication before God comes not via the sacrificial cult but via the atoning death of Jesus. . . . Those who place their faith in Christ are in the right before him, not on the basis of their own work but simply by virtue of their faith in Christ Jesus. The word ἀπολυτρώσεως (v. 24) modifies the participle δικαιούμενοι. The gift of righteousness communicated by God's grace was accomplished through (διά, dia) redemption." Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 189.

come forward and render a decision for salvation.[56] None came forward, but the writer presented the opportunity. After the invitation, the writer served the Lord's Supper to any who chose to partake. At the remaining three communion services over the remainder of the deployment, the writer delivered a brief form of this message before performing the ordinance.

Ephesians 6:10-18

The fifth sermon of this project took place on October 16, 2005. On October 9, the writer invited one of the other Protestant chaplains to preach in the service. Assigned with the writer were four other chaplains: one Roman Catholic and three Protestant chaplains--an Episcopal priest, an Assembly of God minister, and a nondenominational minister. In an attempt at collegiality, and in order for the congregation to received blessings from all whom God had brought to minister at Balad Air Base, the writer invited all of the chaplains to speak. Sadly, they did not extend the same courtesy to the writer.

October 4 commenced the month of Ramadan, the Islamic holy celebration where Muslims believe that Mohammed the Prophet received the Koran.[57] Ramadan

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[56]Acts 2:21. Calvin writes, "Therefore, forasmuch as no man is excluded from calling upon God, the gate of salvation is set open unto all men; neither is there any other thing which keepeth us back from entering in, save only our own unbelief. I speak of all unto whom God doth make himself manifest by the gospel. But like as those which call upon the name of the Lord are sure of salvation, so we must think that, without the same, we are thrice miserable and undone. And when as our salvation is placed in calling upon God, there is nothing in the mean season taken from faith, forasmuch as this invocation is grounded in faith alone." John Calvin, *Acts*, Calvin's Commentaries, electronic ed., Logos Library System (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998), Act 2:21.

[57]*Eerdmans Handbook to the World Religions* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 318-19.

necessitated everyone on the installation wearing body armor and helmets around the

clock for a forty-day period. This amounted to fifty pounds of extra weight to wear while

performing military duties in extreme temperatures. The writer had not known this fact

before he planned to preach on spiritual armor.[58]

      The use of issued individual protective gear was quite effective to illustrate the

spiritual truths that Paul related in Ephesians 6. The preacher placed each piece of

protective gear--web belt, flak vest, combat boots, and the body armor from the flak vest,

helmet, and a Bible--on the altar to illustrate each of the pieces of armor in the Ephesians

passage.[59] He emphasized the fact that God is the one who supplies the armor.[60] In verse

ten, Paul uses the term "strengthened,"[61] which is a command to become able to

function.[62] This was quite evident as the writer was struggling to grow accustomed to the

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[58]According to Hoehner, "It is quite possible that Paul's vivid description of the armor may stem from the fact that, while writing this letter, he was in prison being guarded by Roman soldiers." Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 822.

[59]The expression "full armour" referred to "a complete set of instruments used in defensive or offensive warfare," which were worn by a heavily armed foot soldier. Although subsequent verses do not mention all the weapons, the emphasis here is on donning the "whole armour" in order to receive full protection in this spiritual warfare. Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 462.

[60]Ibid., 463.

[61]ἐνδυναμοῦσθε--Present, Passive, Imperative. The focus here is on the fact that believers do not strengthen themselves; rather, God is the one who strengthens. Putting on the armor alone does not bring strength. The believer is completely dependent upon a loving and grace-giving God. In relation to the emphasis of this verb, Stephen Runge states, "If they wanted something to be viewed as a main action, they used a main verb form (technically 'finite' verbs like the indicative, subjunctive or imperative moods for fellow grammar geeks). If they wanted to describe some action to set that stage for the main action, the writers would use participles before the main action to push the less important action into the background." Stephen Runge, "Who Cares About Participles? I Do," Logos Bible Software Blog [on-line]; accessed 1 December 2008; available from http://blog.logos.com/archives/2008/01/who_cares_about_participles_i_do.html; Internet.

[62]William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, based on Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch Zu Den Schriften Des Neuen Testaments Und Der Frhchristlichen [*sic*] Literatur, 6th ed., ed.

additional weight he was carrying. The writer made the point that preparation for battle is

vital in order to function competently in the battle. Throughout the remainder of verses

eleven through eighteen, Paul uses the pieces of armor to describe how the believer is to

be strengthened.[63] Further, the writer elaborated on verse eleven by equating the necessity

of wearing all of the pieces of armor in order to survive the combat environment.[64]

In addition, the writer was able easily to correlate the spiritual battle[65]

described in verse twelve with the insurgent warfare[66] surrounding and penetrating Balad

Air Base. He conveyed the martial nature of this passage, which the soldiers received

quite effectively. The writer stressed heavily the theme of perseverance and endurance in

Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, with Viktor Reichmann and on previous English eds. by W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 333.

[63]Foulkes writes, "People cannot strengthen themselves, they must be empowered, and that not once for all but constantly, as the tense of the Greek indicates. Furthermore, he [Paul] says, not by the Lord, but in the Lord." Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Intervarsity Press, 1989), 177.

[64]During his deployment, the writer witnessed three individuals with severe injuries due solely to their personal decisions to omit wearing either all or parts of their Individual Body Armor.

[65]Jonathan Edwards writes, "Satan has a kingdom in wicked men's hearts. There he has a throne, and there he makes his residence and keeps his court. The entrance is easy for the devil into wicked men's hearts; the doors always stand open for him, and as long as he has such power in the heart, he will take effectual care that no divine light enters there. He'll keep out spiritual truths. He must be cast out by God's almighty power before any divine understanding will find admittance there. He holds his kingdom by deceit and darkness. 'Tis the devil that blinds their minds.' 2 Corinthians 4:4, 'In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' Therefore devils are called 'the rulers of the darkness of this world'." Jonathan Edwards [1723], *Sermons and Discourses: 1723-1729*, WJE Online 14, ed. Kenneth P. Minkerma.

[66]The United States Army discusses asymmetrical warfare and the tactics of insurgency warfare in its Counter-Insurgency Field Manual 3-24, 1-1 through 1-28 (2006) [on-line]; accessed 2 December 2008; available from http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf; Internet. Further, the manual lays out effective strategies to combat this new type of warfare. Additionally, in describing the type of warfare that Satan wages against believers, the writer pointed to *The Art of War*. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Lawrence: Digireads.com, 2005).

this message. The writer concluded the message by focusing on the need for prayer for fellow soldiers and to be vigilant in encouraging and strengthening one another during the week.

Psalm 34

Originally, the writer scheduled delivery of this message for October 23, 2005. After much consideration and meditation over this Psalm, the writer concluded that he would need to spend several Sundays addressing the depth of this significant passage. He introduced Ps 34:3 on October 23, with Ps 34:1-8 preached on October 30, and Ps 34:15-22 on November 6. As this passage focuses on the exaltation of God, the writer sought to promote the glorification of God as the purpose of believers[67] at Balad Air Base. The preaching of these passages preceded an unforeseen dip in morale and energy. In November, many unit members, the writer included, began to suffer the ubiquitous mid-tour depression. The writer hoped that these verses would pin the focus of believers on their purpose and why God had brought all of them to this place.[68]

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[67]Both the Westminster Shorter (1647) and Larger (1648) Catechisms answer the question, "What is the chief end of man?" with the answer, "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair B. Ferguson, ed., *Reformed Confessions Harmonized* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 3.

[68]Edwards states, "And if it be thus fit that God should have a supreme regard to himself . . . in those things by which he makes himself known, or by his *word* and *works*; . . . And if it was God's intention, as there is great reason to think it was, that his works should exhibit an image of himself their author, that it might brightly appear by his works what manner of being he is, and afford a proper representation of his divine excellencies, and especially his *moral* excellence, consisting in the *disposition of his heart*; then 'tis reasonable to suppose that his works are so wrought as to show this supreme respect to himself wherein his moral excellency does primarily consist." Edwards, *Ethical Writings*, 422.

The thesis of this Psalm draws upon the idea that the true mark of a person of God is in his or her ability to glorify (Piel)[69] and exalt God when circumstances are less than favorable. The context of the Psalm is based in 1 Sam 21:10-15, where David is found in Philistia after fleeing a maniacal Saul,[70] who was bent on killing him. David, in verse three, remarkably declares, "O magnify[71] the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together." In the first sermon, the writer defined each of these terms. In essence, the writer asked the congregants how they were making God big, or magnified, in their lives at Balad Air Base despite the heat, the absence from family, and the mid-tour depression. Further, he exhorted the audience to exalt the reputation and renown of God, the very essence of His name.

In the second message, covering verses one through eight, the writer explored the question as to how one can exalt God. This exaltation was realized through a lifestyle of continuous[72] praise (verse one); persistent and intensive boasting[73] in the Lord (verse two); perpetual seeking of the Lord (verses four and ten);

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[69]Smick translates, "grow up, make great or important, promote, make powerful . . . the increase of things tangible or intangible." Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 151. Further, Mosis states, "refers to the activity that causes something to grow . . . used to convey the idea that men acknowledge and joyfully confess the greatness of God that they have experienced in his acts." Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary*, 2:403-04.

[70]1 Sam 19-20.

[71]"[T]o place the exalted Name of God as high as it really is in itself." Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 5:262.

[72]תָּמִיד. Kaiser states that the word indicates "constancy of personal devotion." Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 151. Cf. Lev 6:13, which states that a "perpetual fire," which must not go out, be kept burning on the altar of burnt offering.

[73]תִּתְהַלֵּל. The Hithpael here indicates reflexive action. Coppes writes, "This root connotes being sincerely and deeply thankful for and/or satisfied in lauding a superior quality(ies) or great act(s) of the object. The themes surrounding and included in the verbal expressions of praise (the psalms) show that

intentional looking unto the Lord (verse five), thereby blinding[74] those around them with the glory of God; a humble crying out to the Lord (verse six); an insatiable desire to find safety in the Lord as a place of refuge[75] by trusting in the Lord (verse eight); a vibrant fear of the Lord (verses seven and nine); actively turning[76] from evil (verses thirteen and fourteen); and continuously seeking (Piel, Imperative) peace and pursuing[77] it with others (verse fourteen).

In the third message, the writer sought to elaborate on the results of exalting God, found in verses fifteen through twenty-two. He reminded the congregants that the eyes of the Lord are perpetually on the righteous, and the ears of the Lord are open continually to the cry of the believer for help (verse fifteen). Further, the Lord delivers the believer from all of his or her troubles, and constantly is present, offering persistent protection for the believer (verse seventeen). Finally, Ps 34 states that the Lord redeems[78]

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it is imperative that God in his deity be recognized and that the fullness thereof be affirmed and stated." Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 217.

[74]וְנָהֲרוּ. Most visibly evident when Moses returned from Mount Sinai in Exod 34:30, "And when Aaron and the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh unto him." Further, the shepherds were "sore" afraid upon seeing the angel of the Lord and the glory of the Lord which shone "round about them," in Luke 2:9.

[75]יֶחֱסֶה. Wiseman elaborates, "This idea of taking refuge may well derive from the common experience of fugitives or of men at war, for whom the adjacent hills provided a ready 'safe height' or 'strong rock' to which the often helpless defender could hurry for protection." Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 308.

[76]סוּר. Imperative. Turn aside or defection. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 620.

[77]וְרָדְפֵהוּ. Piel imperative. This is the same word found in Ps 23:6 in reference to pursuing with the intention to overtake.

[78]יוֹשִׁיעַ. Hiphil active. The LORD causes the deliverance of the believer. One finds this concept of salvation in Exod 15:2 in relation to God "saving" Israel.

the life of the servant and promises that he will never leave him or her desolate. At the conclusion, the preacher reaffirmed that the primary purpose of each believer at Balad Air Base was to exalt and glorify God to all of those around them in order to be beacons of light and hope in the midst of the continuing violence and combat sur rounding them.

John 14:15

The writer preached the ninth message of this project on November 20, 2005.[79] The writer stressed in John 14:15 the crucial importance of keeping the commandments of Jesus. This obedience demonstrates the love that the believer has for the Lord.[80] The writer used the various nuances of the Greek word "τηρεω."[81] He encouraged the listeners to keep the commandments by preserving and protecting the faith evident in their lives, through vigorous maintenance of the faith in their lives, and through execution of their faith through observing and fulfilling the words of Jesus.[82]

The desert of Iraq is a brutal environment in which to perform a continuous mission. The toll taken on personnel and equipment is profound. The sand is different than sand found on American beaches. The sand is a fine, talcum-like powder that invades everything. This unique sand wreaked havoc on the aircraft and vehicles. The

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[79]On November 13, the nondenominational chaplain spoke during the service.

[80]Craig Keener states, "What Jesus describes here is not a formula--it is far too circular for that--but the pattern for developing relationship." Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 972.

[81]τηρέω. Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New*, 1002.

[82]A substantial debate occurs as to whether or not τηρήσατε is in the future tense or is an imperative. Both interpretations can be taken into consideration and, thereby, enhance the understanding and application of the verse. Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1994), 208.

need for vigilance in maintaining aircraft that protected American, Iraqi, and Coalition forces throughout Iraq was a crucial mission, necessitating the need for over one-thousand maintainers for twenty-four jets. This illustration further underscored the need for the same level of maintenance in the lives of the congregants.

Thanksgiving

Earlier in the writer's tour, he received permission to develop a Community Thanksgiving Service for the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing. Although not a traditional worship service, he geared the service to educate and contextualize the deployment to the foundations of Thanksgiving in American history. Due to the broad invitation and inclusion of commanders and unit members from a variety of religious faiths, the writer believed a wonderful opportunity existed to connect the Christian beginnings surrounding the American holiday with the current operation in Iraq. Elements of the service included the story of the first thanksgiving; proclamations of various presidents, including George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and George W. Bush; and an *a cappella* rendition of the Puritan hymn, *I Sought the Lord*, which proclaims trust in the providence of God. The message is as follows:

> Thanksgiving Day! What an incredible flood of memories it brings every one of us. I think that of any day here when I have missed my couch more--it would be today! Thanksgiving weekend has always been a time to relax, eat turkey, watch football, send the wife shopping, and begin the annual ritual of putting up Christmas decorations. However, my favorite tradition around this time of the year is to watch the University of Texas Longhorns pummel the hapless Aggies in their annual match!
>
> This year, however, is a little different. There is no couch, no home, no shopping, no comfort! We are here, together, at Balad Air Base in the nation of Iraq--thinking of home. We have heard this morning about a different Thanksgiving celebration than what we are used to enjoying. I submit that, for many here, this is

the first Thanksgiving we have ever celebrated where we have so much in common with those early pilgrims.

The pilgrims traveled from home to a distant land. Originally, these English Separatists lived in the town of Leyden, Holland.[83] They had gone there to flee religious persecution in England. Despite toleration by the government, though, these religious people decided that the best thing to do for their children and their children's children, would be to journey to the New World and establish a new home. Upon arrival, they faced great hardship. Over the first winter, close to half of their number perished from cold, starvation, and disease.[84] These loved ones would be buried near the colony church-house, which served also as the public meeting room.[85] The feast itself would take place near the graveyard filled with friends and family members. Yet, the surviving Pilgrims would be able to thank God for his providential care over their lives.

Interestingly, around ninety Native Americans joined this feast of celebration and thanksgiving. Remarkably, they did not want to leave their new-found friends. A unique friendship and cooperation developed between these two peoples. Out of these meager beginnings, a new nation eventually would be born out of thirteen original colonies.

We, too, have journeyed from our homes to a far and distant land. We are not here simply for ourselves, but also for the Iraqi people. Our hope is that what we do here will mean something to the children and grandchildren of the present-day Iraqi citizens. Much like the Pilgrims, we have faced great hardship. Many of our comrades have been wounded, and some two thousand Americans have given their lives for OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. We have watched flag-draped coffins loaded onto planes and seen cordons of tearful soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and civilians honor our fallen comrades--and still we can thank God.

We can thank God, because we are here contributing to something larger than ourselves. Ten years after the Plymouth Colony was founded, a Puritan, John Winthrop, journeyed across the stormy Atlantic to settle in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He wrote in his diary, "*For this end we must be knit together. We must entertain each other in brotherly affection. We must be willing to give up our superfluities to supply others' necessities. . . . We must delight in each other; make others' conditions our own; rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together. . . . So shall we keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The Lord will be our God, and . . . make us a praise and a glory, that men shall say of later plantations, 'May the Lord make it like that of New England'.*" What Winthrop and

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[83]Tim Dowley, J. H. Y. Briggs, Robert Dean Linder, and David F. Wright, *Introduction to the History of Christianity*, originally published 1995; includes indexes (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 437.

[84]Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 39.

[85]William P. Grady, *What Hath God Wrought! A Biblical Interpretation of American History* (Knoxville: Grady Publications, 1996), 63-64.

the Pilgrims sought to do was to build a great society, which would promote peace, justice, and hope for the world. We here are on a similar mission.

During this deployment, we have witnessed transforming history in a region of the world that has only known dictatorship and tyranny. Our very presence has allowed the seed of liberty, freedom, and justice to be planted for the Iraqi people. We ourselves might not see this seed grow into a tall and mighty tree . . . but neither did Winthrop nor the Pilgrims. In fact, our mission here is the fruition of their dreams, their hopes, and their prayers. For that we can be thankful.

We can be thankful also that we are contributing to the larger war on terrorism, which rocked our nation four years ago. The first Sunday many of us were here at Balad was the fourth anniversary of those deadly attacks in New York, Washington D.C., and a Pennsylvania field. Each day we are deployed brings the fight to the enemy and away from our homes and families. We are thankful that our nation has not experienced what many other nations are experiencing. We are thankful that our presence here stands as a shield of protection, not only for ourselves, but for the Iraqi people.

Before my deployment here, I had the opportunity to view past editions of the "Red Tail Flyer." In one edition, I viewed photographs of a humanitarian mission to a local school. When I saw the pictures of the teachers and children holding up several of the items, which were given to them, I realized then that our mission could already be counted successful. Due to our efforts, children across this nation could now learn more than they ever could have dreamed before. By providing a shield of protection--whether through piloting an F-16 or Predator, flying a helicopter, guarding a convoy, maintaining aircraft, guarding a gate, working on legal issues, commanding a squadron, fixing the AFN, or passing out slushies at the Recreation Tent--we are giving these people a chance--and for that we can be thankful!

I can count on one more thing for which to be thankful--the memories I am forging of being here in Balad. Soon, many of us will begin out-processing and returning back to our lives at an active-duty base or at a civilian job. Next year's Thanksgiving will arrive before we know it. There we will be . . . stretched out on a couch, eating turkey and stuffing, and watching the Longhorns whoop up on A & M. I am sure that my thoughts will flood once more back to this place. I am sure that I will smile as I recall the DFAC,[86] the gravel, the Cadillacs,[87] my IBA,[88] the burn dump, and Chief Master Sergeant Clark and his reflective belt! I will remember also something that my father told my mother a long time ago. After thirty-two years of service in the Army Air Corps/Air Force, my dad volunteered for two tours to Vietnam as an Ammo Troop. He told my mother that he did that so "his sons would not have to go." He hoped for a better future.

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[86]The military dining facility.

[87]Portable toilets.

[88]Individual Body Armor.

We do not know what the course of our future will hold for ourselves or the Iraqi people, but we can know that we all did our part to try to make the world a better place, not just for ourselves, not just for our families, but for all of humanity. Very few people and nations could ever imagine attempting to accomplish what we are here doing on a daily basis.

Today, we are thankful for our nation, for our president, for our commanders, for our families, and for our friends. May God truly bless our nation, our cause, and may His Providential Grace extend throughout the earth. Amen.

Mark 1:1-8

The writer preached the eleventh sermon of this project on December 4, 2005. The writer sought to stress the importance of the congregants being prophets of God's truth. He explained this through the exegesis and exposition of Mark 1:1-8. As this particular sermon marked the beginning of Advent, the writer utilized the context of Christmas to enhance the hearer's understanding of the text. In verse two, the writer exhorted the congregants that the purpose of the prophet, or messenger, is to prepare[89] the way of the Messiah, stressing the general understanding of the role of an apostle.

In verse three, the text commands the listener truly to make the paths straight![90] The writer sought to encourage the audience to bring scriptural truth into their varied occupations in the Wing by focusing on the fact that Scripture is sufficient for all things.

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[89]Ἑτοιμάσατε. Aorist Active Imperative. The notion of military readiness and preparation permeates the armed forces. A constant stream of inspections and military exercises rate a military unit's level of "readiness." The force of the aorist imperative here requires a continuous state of readiness. Mounce calls this the "continuous imperative." William B. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek: A Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1993), 303. In light of the content of the message, William Lane states, "The explicit reference to Isaiah indicates that the gospel receives its proper interpretation only in the light of the coming salvation promised in the prophetic word." William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 43.

[90]ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ. The verbal action is a Present Active Imperative.

In verse five, Mark focuses on the idea that another job of the prophet is to provide the avenue for repentance.[91] As chaplains visibly affect people when they enter a work-center, the question is, do the congregants cause the same effect of conviction through their speech, lives, and conduct?

In verse six, the preacher conveyed that John the Baptist had a peculiar look about him and that the contemporary believer should as well.[92] The witness of the believer through application of a holy life, holy speech, and holy conduct should provide the avenue through which the Holy Spirit convicts nonbelievers. In verse seven, John the Baptist provides a model for Christian humility by recognizing that he points toward the Messiah and does not point to himself as Messiah. Finally, in verse eight, the writer stressed that the prophetic work is not solely the work of any human being, but the sovereign work of God through Jesus Christ. The work of the believer is temporal; God's work is eternal. The believer's dependency should then be upon the Holy Spirit to enable him or her to do the work of the prophet.

Isaiah 61

The twelfth sermon of this project centered on Isaiah 61 and focused on the mission statement of the believer as realized in Jesus Christ. This passage points to Jesus as the model of the believer's ministry. In verse one, God anoints all believers[93] through

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[91]μετανοίας refers to the notion of conversion.

[92]Exod 19:5, Deut 14:2, Deut 26:18, Ps 135:4, Titus 2:14, and (specifically) 1 Pet 2:9.

[93]מָשַׁח. Victor Hamilton writes, "There is a fourfold theological significance of annointing. First, to anoint an individual or an object indicated an authorized separation for God's service. Secondly, though the agent might be the priest or prophet, writers speak of anointed ones as those whom the Lord anointed. Such language underscores that it is God who is the authorizing agent; that the anointed is

the agency of the Holy Spirit,[94] thereby consecrating them for the service of God alone to

preach good tidings,[95] bind up[96] the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captive, and

open[97] the prison of the bound.

In verse two, the writer stressed the mission of proclaiming the delight and

favor of God, alongside the day of the vengeance[98] of God. The writer utilized verse three

to point out that God commands believers to provide beauty, joy, and garments[99] of

praise to those who are mournful--in essence, to encourage, console, and comfort those

who are saddened. Connecting this idea to verse four, the writer exhorted the congregants

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inviolable; and that the anointed one is to be held in special regard. Thirdly, one may infer that divine enablement was understood as accompanying anointing. Finally, in the form anointing was associated with the coming promised deliverer Jesus." Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 530.

[94]Edward Young writes, "This [anointing] is a Trinitarian shade that should not be overlooked. . . . This anointing with the Spirit is essential and abiding so that the work described may be carried out." Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 3:459.

[95]בָּשַׂר. Piel Active Infinitive Construct. The Piel denotes intensified publishing of good news.

[96]חָבַשׁ. This carries the idea of bandaging which medicates and heals the wounded.

[97]פְּקַח־קוֹחַ. Victor Hamilton states that open here "refers to the opening of the eyes with two exceptions: Isa 42:20, the opening of the ears; and Isa 61:1, the opening of a prison to those who are bound (cf. Luke 4:18-19). Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 732.

[98]נָקַם. Elmer Smick states, "Most of the uses of this word involve God as the source of vengeance. The classical passage is Deut 32:35, 41, "Vengeance is mine . . . I will recompense them who hate me." God cannot be true to his character of holiness and justice if he allows sin and rebellion to go unpunished. Since in the course of history, the record can never totally be straight, the final day of the Lord's vengeance is called forth. Such a day is in mind in Isa 63:1-6. The Bible balances the fury of God's vengeance against the sinner with the greatness of his mercy on those whom he redeems from sin. One must never view God's vengeance apart from his purpose to show mercy. He is not *only* the God of wrath, but must be the God of wrath in order for his mercy to have meaning. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 598.

[99]מַעֲטֶה. Literally to be wrapped in a cloak or mantle. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 661.

to take broken lives and make them beautiful once again, which is the hope of glory.[100]

The writer focused on the believer's position as a priest[101] in verse six, noting that the

reputation of the believer is one of a handler of sacred things, versus acting like Hophni

and Phinehas.[102] The writer concluded the message by stressing the mission of the

believers as one of displaying the splendor of God. With the end of deployment nearing,

the writer encouraged each of the listeners not to give up on their called mission to be

prophets, priests, and ambassadors of Christ at Balad Air Base.

Luke 1:26-38

The thirteenth sermon of this project centered on Mary's statement, "Be it unto

me," found in Luke 1:26-38. The writer had the objective that the congregants would take

upon themselves this attitude of Mary in submission to the sovereign work of God in

their lives. The writer focused on the fact that God favors his servants with his purpose,

as found in verses twenty-six through thirty. Further, he exhorted the congregants to

submit to God's calling on their lives, even when God calls them into difficult

circumstances as He did Mary in becoming pregnant out of wedlock.[103] Finally, the

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[100]The ESV states quite beautifully, "They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise [Piel] up the former devastations; they shall repair [Piel] the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations."

[101]כֹּהֵן. Compare with 1 Pet 2:5, 9 where the idea of a nation of priests is developed. The focus on the believer is to "offer spiritual sacrifices" and to "show forth the praises of him who has called believers out of darkness into his marvelous light."

[102]1 Sam 2:12-36.

[103]Geldenhuys states that "she clearly realized how radically it would influence her social position and especially her relation to Joseph if she would become pregnant before her marriage." Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), 78.

writer stressed the point that Mary, in verse 38, accepted God's sovereign plan for her life without question, a true model for the believer.

As many attendees would be departing Balad in the next couple of weeks, the writer spent much of the sermon discussing the application of these truths, and all the subjects of prior sermons, as they were making preparation to enter new chapters in their lives. He told the congregants that they should never forget their callings or the need for endurance in Christ as they faced new challenges. This message was the last message preached by the writer in Iraq during this particular deployment.

Luke 2

A visit from the Chief of Chaplains, United States Air Force cancelled the final message of this project, "Christmas Has Its Cradle, but Easter Has Its Joy," which was to be delivered on Christmas Sunday, December 25, 2005. The writer intended to preach on Luke 2, reading the Christmas story and connecting it with the Easter story--focusing particularly on John 3:16. The writer planned to exhort the congregants concerning their collective task, as realized in Genesis 12, Psalm 34, Isaiah 61/Luke 6, Mark 1, and Luke 1, tying together the main ideas from the previous sermons preached during the deployment. In essence, he would have stressed the themes of the deployment and exhorted each congregant to continue in his or her next assignment what God had revealed to them through His Word in Iraq.

Prior to the service, the writer had the privilege of joining the chapel choir in singing Christmas carols at the base hospital. The group sang the Gospel to every ward in the hospital, blessing countless wounded soldiers and hospital workers. Some wards in

the hospital housed wounded Iraqi soldiers. Hearing the joyous sounds of carols, the Iraqis requested the choir to come and sing all of the choir's songs of the Christian faith to them. Comprehending the fact that the group was witnessing to these Muslims, the emotion overcame the writer, rendering him unable to sing. The experience was quite humbling, given the recognition that a sovereign God was allowing this group to proclaim His Gospel to the heathen.

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The deployment to Balad Air Base, Iraq, proved challenging to the writer in many areas. The physical, emotional, and spiritual environment forced the writer to rethink many cherished theological views. Although the writer never departed from many positions held before his deployment, the reshaping of key components of his faith into a new understanding occurred. This chapter will explore a reevaluation of theological themes presumed during the pre-deployment phase, theological themes not appreciated in light of the deployment, and theological themes realized by the writer during the post-deployment phase.

The premise of the writer's project centered upon the idea that a comprehensive thematic and exegetical preaching plan is essential to meeting the spiritual and emotional needs of servicemen and women assigned to combat environments. The writer developed various themes, which he believed would minister adequately to the various spiritual and emotional needs of assigned personnel. The writer assumed wrongly that his congregation would be comprised primarily of Air Force personnel. The majority of attendees were Army enlisted soldiers. The writer found this to be odd, as the supporting Logistic Support Area Anaconda had over forty Army chaplains assigned providing over thirty worship services. Additionally, a number of civilian contractors attended the service. This variety of congregants challenged a

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preaching focus centered on the needs of Air Force personnel and required a more inclusive approach.

With this diversity of attendees in mind, the planning of preaching texts before deployment proved to be crucial in meeting unforeseen theological needs. A proper theology of preaching, especially in relation to planning, allowed the writer latitude in focusing on subthemes in relation to the chosen texts. Had the writer approached preaching at Balad Air Base in a cavalier fashion, his preselected themes would have gone unmet. As a part of this project, the writer's query to other chaplains for their texts and sermonic outlines received very little response.

As the writer viewed other sermons at the base, he uncovered dreadfully superficial treatments of the various chosen texts. In several cases, the chaplain read the passage at the beginning of the message and promptly proceeded to move rapidly from the selected text. This was especially evident in the sermons of those preachers invited to speak during the writer's services. In one case, the preacher addressed the devil more than he did the chosen text.[1] In another instance, the preacher utilized Air Force-centric terminology throughout his message that bore no resonance with the large Army population. The painful nature of these gyrated performances underscored the incredible need presented by the deployed members. In essence, combat warriors deserve the preacher's very best efforts in sermon planning, preparation, and delivery.

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[1]Cf. Ps 149, which promotes the idea that the acts of praising and glorifying God actually execute, bind, and judge the nations and principalities. Considered along with Jesus' use of the Word of God to rebuke the Devil during the temptation in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11), the description of the Word of God as a sword in Eph 6:17, and the description of Jesus at the Second Coming as having a two-edged sword coming out of his mouth in judgment over the nations (Rev 19:15), a proper theology of spiritual warfare promotes the proclamation of the Word as the primary and most effective means by which believers "resist" the devil (Jas 4:7).

Theological Themes

God's Sovereignty

A central theme that the writer wished to stress was the total aspect of God's sovereignty over all of life, including the believer. The first theological crisis in which the writer found himself concerned this central truth of the Christian faith. The writer reeled during the first attack he experienced at Balad Air Base. Up until this point in his life, the writer had only assented intellectually to the fact that God controlled his life and destiny. Until faced with the actual chance that he could experience death or horrible wounding in Iraq, this truth was something about which to utter an "amen," but the truth had not been truly realized in faith.

The question as to whether or not God is involved intimately in each individual life[2] moves to the forefront in a combat environment. As the writer neared the end of his tour, he reentered this debate as he struggled with the notion that he might not make it home. Fear, something not truly experienced before this deployment, became the wrestler in the ring with faith. This struggle not only evidenced itself in the writer, but in other

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[2]According to Grudem, "God is actively related to and involved in the creation at each moment, creation is distinct from him. Moreover, the biblical doctrine does not teach that events in creation are determined by chance, nor are they determined by impersonal fate, but by God, who is the personal yet infinitely powerful Creator and Lord." Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 315. Chafer focuses on the details of the individual when he writes, "The divine care reaches to the least detail of life as well as to its greater aspects." Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1993; originally published Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947-1948), 1:256. Chafer illuminates the impact of God's sovereignty when he states, "According to the uniform and pervading teaching of the Scriptures, God is not merely a God afar off. He is not a mere spectator of the universe which He has made, but is everywhere present in his essence, knowledge, and power. To his sustaining hand the continuance of all things is constantly referred; and if He withdraws his presence they cease to be." Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, ed. Edward N. Gross (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1997), 576. In contrast, Open Theism states, "God, in grace, grants significant freedom to cooperate with or work against God's will for our lives, and he enters into dynamic, give-and-take relationships with us." Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger, *The Openness of God: A*

deployed members as well. Addressing this struggle through an honest lens was crucial at the beginning of the tour.

The sovereign nature of God certainly is evident in Psalm 23. Throughout this familiar Psalm, verbal aspects point to a God who is shepherding his people intimately. This is seen in the fact that the Lord is the one who leads the believer--even through the valley of the shadow of death (verse four), as well as in green pastures (verse two). The Lord does not rescue the believer out of the valley, but rather drives the believer through the valley. Higher headquarters and personnel managers determine where many military members will be stationed or deployed. In the service, no such thing as free will exists, except at the time of reenlistment. Once sworn in, the military member's specific branch of service owns him or her.

In deployment situations, very few volunteer for the specific location in which they actually are sent. In the writer's situation, he requested Balad Air Base, but could have ended up anywhere that a more pressing need required his presence. In light of Ps 23, the Lord is truly the one who directs such movements. His promise is not to keep the believer from harmful situations, but to provide for the believer and to be faithful in all situations. The theme of providence links inextricably to the believer's purpose. The writer will review this multifaceted purpose later.

Stressing this theme in preaching, especially at the beginning of the deployment, strengthened the hearers as well as the writer and gave them hope to focus

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Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 7.

on their military and spiritual missions. Throughout the deployment, whether by worship service attendees or not, many requested prayer for protection and sovereign care. Even as the writer prayed that every mortar and rocket would extinguish before it hit the base, not every mortar and missile extinguished. The writer had to trust that the lives and safety of his fellow servicemen and women were in the hands of an Almighty God, requiring trust and faith in His ability to govern His creation.

Theodicy

A theme not developed during the preparation for deployment was the concept of theodicy, or the reconciliation of the sovereignty of God with the existence of evil and suffering.[3] Although the writer developed this theme partially, giving it a tertiary level in the proclaimed messages, the writer needed to make an opportunity to discuss this issue, especially when he discovered the number of medical personnel who attended his services. The writer did not give sufficient recognition to the horrific carnage that the military medical personnel observed during this rotation.[4] This theme necessitates a debate[5] between sovereignty and free will as well as the problem of evil and suffering in a theological construct affirming the absolute sovereignty of God.

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[3]Alvin Plantinga summarizes, "If God is as benevolent as Christian theists claim, He must be just as appalled as we are at all this evil. But if He is also as powerful as they claim, then presumably He is in a position to do something about it. So why does he permit it?" Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 9.

[4]In addition to Coalition forces, the medical hospital treated insurgents, Al-Qaeda as well as civilian casualties. Perhaps the most difficult and disconcerting were the little children who were injured.

[5]An indicator of this debate can be seen between Gregory Boyd and John Piper following the collapse of the I-35 Bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota on August 1, 2007. In a post on his website DesiringGod.org, John Piper relates a discussion he had with his daughter concerning the tragedy as he put her to bed. He relates that his "appointed devotional reading for the evening was from Luke 13:1-5 [the story of the collapsed tower]. His daughter, in light of the reading and recent tragedy, states, "Maybe he let

In essence, the tension between the orthodox belief of a sovereign, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God and the very existence of suffering,[6] injustice, tragedy, and death is quite pointed. Harold Kushner states one of the more compelling cases, arguing against the notion of God's sovereign control of evil and suffering. He posits the statement that the only question that really matters is, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" He further states that all other theological conversation is "intellectually diverting."[7]

Kushner states two positions concerning God and the reality of evil and suffering in the world. He finds it difficult to hold to a biblical understanding of God's relation to evil and suffering. Attempting to assuage himself and his readers, Kushner pronounces that one must acknowledge that God is not all-powerful. Further, he specifies

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it fall because God wanted all the people in Minneapolis to fear Him." Piper responds that her statement might be the reason God let it happen. From the post, "Putting My Daughter to Bed Two Hours After the Bridge Collapsed: What Do Tragedies Like this Mean for Us?" [on-line]; accessed 2 April 2009; available from http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TasteAndSee/ByDate/2007/2278_Putting_My_ Daughter_to_Bed_Two_Hours_After_the_Bridge_Collapsed/; Internet. Gregory Boyd, a known Open Theist, responds to Piper's post with several points. He first states that he does not believe that God was involved in the collapse of the tower or massacre detailed by Luke 13:1-5. Second, Boyd remarks that man is no longer punished directly for sin since Jesus died on the Cross for all of humanity's sins. Third, Boyd claims that God has to publish his reason for punishment first and, therefore, the bridge collapse is not a sign of God's judgment on Minneapolis. Finally, Boyd writes that since people and angels are free agents, no need exists to appeal to vindictive divine purpose to explain tragedy. Greg Boyd, "Why the 35W Bridge Collapsed" [on-line]; accessed 2 April 2009, available from http://www.gregboyd.org/popular/the-35w-bridge-collapse-and-the-book-of-job-blog-post-from-8-29-07/; Internet.

[6]Rodin categorizes suffering into the following categories: (1) Suffering as a result of the wages of sin. (2) Suffering as chastisement and correction from the hand of God. (3) Suffering for the sake of testing and strengthening of faith. (4) Suffering as a result of our faith and faithful obedience. (5) Suffering as a result of the sinful state of the world. R. Scott Rodin, *Evil and Theodicy in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 1997), 6-9.

[7]Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Publishing, 2004), 6. Further, John Thiel states that "innocent suffering exists and that God has no agency at all in death." John Thiel, *God, Evil, and Innocent Suffering* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2002), 104.

that there are "some things that God cannot control"; therefore, "many good things become possible."[8] The difficulty here is that once God's omnipotence has been breached, then he ceases to become God in the biblical sense. God is diminished to humanity's level and man, as well as bad luck and evil, are elevated to the same position as God. Kushner maintains that one can, with this enlightened understanding, maintain one's own self-respect. However, one gains self-respect only in the impeccable nature of God. Our dependence on God's stability is crucial in the biblical concept of hope.

In contrast, John Piper, in a national conference on human suffering, counters the Kushner pattern of philosophy with ten pronouncements regarding God's sovereignty over suffering.[9] He states that God is sovereign over Satan's delegated world rule. Piper stresses that Satan can only wreak havoc in the world with God's permission and limitations.[10] In essence, Piper argues, if the Sovereign of the universe bows to anyone's will, then He ceases to be sovereign. Further, Piper states that God is sovereign over Satan and all demons and evil spirits.[11]

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[8]Ibid., 45. Winkelmann states, "Increasingly, many ordinary people do not find these three classical theistic explanations of suffering credible. Any one of them can seem to lead to a God who does not care about the suffering of the innocent. . . . Why would a God allow so many women and children . . . to be beaten, raped, enslaved and killed. . . ." Carol Winkelmann, "In the Bible it Can Be so Harsh! Battered Women, Suffering and Evil," in *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*, ed. Peter van Inwagen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 155.

[9]From the 2005 Desiring God Conference *Suffering and the Sovereignty of* God. John Piper, "Ten Aspects of God's Sovereignty Over Suffering and Satan's Hand in It" [on-line]; accessed 2 April 2009; available from http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/ConferenceMessages/ByDate/ 227_ Ten_Aspects_of_Gods_Sovereignty_Over_Suffering_and_Satans_Hand_in_It/; Internet.

[10]Dan 2:20. According to Rodin, Barth believes that "God is free to cause what He will. . . . In fact God would not be God if He were not the God who causes and, equally, the God who permits and forbears . . . this permitting is a necessary aspect of divine will!" Rodin, *Evil and Theodicy*, 105.

[11]Mark 1:27.

Additionally, Satan's hand in persecution of the saints is controlled. Pointing to 1 Pet 3:17, he remarks that if God wills that believers suffer for doing good, then they will suffer. God has the last word, not Satan. Further, God is sovereign over Satan's ability to take life.[12] Even in light of natural disasters,[13] Piper makes a compelling argument for God's Sovereignty by pointing to Elihu's argument in Job 37:10-14:

> By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud: And it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy. Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.

Piper finalizes his argument stating that God is sovereign over Satan's sickness-causing power, Satan's use of animals and plants, his temptation to sin, mind-blinding power and spiritual bondage. Piper summarizes the argument by stating, "The evil and suffering in this world are greater than any of us can comprehend. But evil and suffering are not ultimate. God is. Satan, the great lover of evil and suffering is not sovereign.[14] God is."[15]

In the military context, precise treatment of this subject can provide substantial comfort and clarification to those who encounter horrific death, destruction, and cruelty firsthand. To witness servicemen and women decapitated, maimed, limbless, or with

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[12]This is seen in the account of Job in Job 2:6 as well as in Deut 32:39.

[13]In the beginning of Job, God "loosens Satan's leash" to allow two human atrocities and two natural disasters.

[14]One invited chaplain, preaching in the writer's worship service, believed that before he could preach, he needed to cast the devil out of the service!

[15]See Dan 4:35, Isa 46:10, Lam 3:37-38, Amos 3:6, Prov 19:21, and Prov 16:33. From the 2005 Desiring God Conference, "Suffering and the Sovereignty of God." Piper, *Ten Aspects of God's Sovereignty*; Internet.

exposed internal organs is disconcerting. Military medical personnel and those

volunteering to help in the hospitals are trained properly to shield themselves from this

type of emotional trauma. However, very little can guard a military member faced with

treating or caring for a half-burned child suffering from an Improvised Explosive Device.

The chaplaincy pulpit is the one place in a combat theater to find spiritual healing in the

arms of a sovereign God.

Just War

The second theme not developed during the preparation for deployment, was

the concept of a just-war theory. Over the centuries, primarily Catholic theologians[16]

have used this theory to outline a construct of what conditions permit hostile action by

one nation toward another nation. Men and women fighting in the Global War on Terror

must be certain that the conflict in which they are engaged is proper and just. Only two

channels can communicate this. The first channel is the warrior's chain-of-command

leading to the Commander-in-Chief. The chain-of-command must convey clarity of

purpose and thought to instill a sense of duty and willingness to carry out lethal orders.

The second channel is through the moral authority of the military chaplain. When

chaplains validate a conflict or operation in light of just-war concepts, a powerful sense

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[16]Philip Schaff, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, St. Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997); and Aquinas, *On War*, Summa Theologica (Benzinger Brothers ed., 1947), III. II, Q. 40, 1859. As mentioned earlier, The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides four rationales for a nation to begin a war: "(1) The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain; (2) All other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective; (3) There must be serious prospects of success; (4) The use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated." *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 555.

of meaning and purpose is conveyed. An absent voice can lead some military members to question their actions in light of their faith.[17]

For centuries, people of faith have debated the question of whether a country should ever use military force.[18] The West has waged this debate since the days of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Concerning the concept of just war, Aquinas stipulated three guiding principles that have been enhanced over the centuries into current United States foreign policy. In his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas stated that for a war to be declared, it must first come from proper authority.[19] Rom 13:4, in reference to rulers, states, "For he is the minister of God to thee for good . . . a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Second, Aquinas states that a just cause is required.[20] Third, he writes, "it is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they

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[17] This questioning is underscored by a cursory glance at many Old Testament accounts of brutality accomplished by Israel towards their enemies. (See Deuteronomy 20:16, Leviticus 18:24, et al). Without spiritual guidance, modern military operations can produce troubling issues in military members, especially when civilian population centers/targets are involved.

[18] Adeney rightly points out that the categories of *jus ad bellum* suffer from an "inherent subjectivity, and a lack of consensus about their content." He states further that, "Ultimately they fail because they assume a different meaning to war than the reality we face today." He further argues that the just war rules are outmoded due to the advent of atomic and nuclear technologies. Bernard Adenay, *Just War, Political Realism, and Faith* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1988), 125. Additionally, modern tactics employed by Al-Qaeda, the Iraq Insurgency, and the resurgent Taliban insurgency render many of the staid rules of the Just War matrix obsolete. O'Donovan paints a sobering portrait of insurgency warfare when he states, "the insurgent makes his point by forcing his opponent to slaughter the innocent unintentionally." Oliver O'Donovan, *The Just War Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 64. Countering these points becomes the task for the chaplain and command structure in order to provide a solid moral and ethical foundation for servicemen and women.

[19] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q. 40, A. 1. Regan writes, "One of the primary purposes of organized society is to protect its members from domestic and foreign violence, and to do so, organized society needs to regulate any use of force . . . organized society needs to rest authority to wage war in certain institutions and personnel authorized to make their war decisions." Richard Regan, *Just War: Principles and Cases* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 20.

[20] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q. 40, A.1.

intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil."[21] Several other principles

have been added since Aquinas' time[22]--a reasonable chance of success and the end being

proportioned to the means used. An appreciation must be present of the psychological

effects of wrongdoing and violence, coupled with a desire to "forestall any resort to war

from the motives of vengeance, hatred, ambition, cruelty, greed, or hysteria."[23]

Martin Luther taught that without arms, peace could not be kept. He thought

that sometimes wars had to be waged to repel injustice and establish a firm peace.[24] In his

Institutes of the Christian Religion, John Calvin defended the idea of a just war. He stated

that princes, by virtue of natural equity and the nature of their office, have the right to be

armed, both to restrain the misdeeds of private individuals by judicial punishment and to

defend, by war, the realms entrusted to their safekeeping.[25]

The question then leads to a person of faith's involvement in the military and

war. One solution to the tension between being peacemakers and warriors can be found in

the understanding between private and public duties as well as personal duties and duties

of the state. In the private arena, believers are to be at peace with their neighbors as much

as possible. Individuals are to turn the other cheek when struck. Individuals are not to be

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[21]Ibid.

[22]See Francisco de Vitoria, *Reflections: De Indis et de jure belli*, ed. Ernest Nys (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1917).

[23]Ralph Potter, "The Moral Logic of War," in *War in the Twentieth Century: Sources in Theological Ethics*, ed. Richard Miller (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 205-07.

[24]Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Christian in Society III, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999, c1967), 46:99-100.

[25]Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, xx, 11.

riotous, bullies, and strikers, but are to strive for peace. However, responsibilities are quite different when individuals stand in the position of a guardian of a third party as is the case of a civil magistrate or parent. Because they are responsible for the lives and welfare of others, they must resist, even with force, any unjust aggression against them. Moreover, loving one's neighbor or enemy does not mean they must stand idly by when injustice is occurring. They are to use whatever force is necessary to protect the life and safety of others. The state stands in this third-party relationship to its citizens and, therefore, must enact justice and protection.

During the time of crises and overt war, the sensibilities and perspectives of individuals must attune themselves to the obligation to defend their nation and participation in the affairs of state. However, individuals are not excused from being advocates for the biblical standards of morality, compassion, mercy, and restraint when it comes to dealing with an opposing nation, state, belligerent organization (e.g., Al-Qaeda), or national insurgencies.

The moral problems of war, in relation to the believer, deserve specific treatment. Flowing from the nature of God, and what His character reveals in relation to dealing with one another, the chaplain must elucidate the contemporary conflict, answering the specific mandates of just war. Assuring congregants that the war is just and right enables military members to implement their duties undeterred. Further, clear communication minimizes the cloud of doubt that can deteriorate morale and combat effectiveness.

Sanctification

Hope. The idea of hope is linked to the sovereignty of God. In the modern understanding of hope, the perception is that hope is merely wishful thinking. Luck, fate, karma, or fatalism tend to direct the lives of many people. These flawed epistemological views fall short in the violent battle space of Iraq. Just as military members need to know that their commanders and their chain-of-command are clear on the mission, they also possess a high expectation concerning the existence of God and knowing that He is interested in their well-being. Biblical hope[26] provides the framework of a worldview that all matters will be resolved according to God's design.

In the minds of the servicemen or women, injury or death is not the primary driver of fear or concern. The sharpest effect upon the souls and spirits of military members is a meaningless death or injury. Others confer nobility upon injury or death that occurs in light of an honorable task. Losing this sense of meaning in the combat situation in which one finds oneself strips away this nobility. As the Vietnam War strategy deteriorated to the point of meaninglessness, soldiers in the field refused to function and lost hope in their national leaders.[27] In the current war, due to the mission of

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[26]Mayer writes in his article on hope, "Hope is characteristic of the one who has been justified. The person who stands in grace possesses hope for the glory of God. This hope is not disappointed because of God's love, which has already been demonstrated, i.e., because of the justification and reconciliation through Christ already effected by God. Finally, this hope is supported by the divine predestination of the believer to salvation and thus receives the greatest possible basis for security." Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, translation of *Exegetisches Worterbuch Zum Neuen Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990-c1993), 1:438. Concerning the Old Testament usage of hope, Washke states, "The noun describes the hope that emanates from Yahweh, the God of Israel, and can be expected only from Him . . . therefore there is only one possible answer to the question of the object of hope." Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary*, 15:763.

[27]Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainer, *The Generals' War* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1995), 40-41.

fighting the war on terrorism that has a clear definition, many injured military members express the desire to return to their units and complete the mission. This concept of mission is comparable to the believer's hope.

Biblical hope refers to confident expectation in the nature and character of the Lord. Preaching on biblical hope delivers key truths that undergird believers in the understanding of how the Lord operates with his creation. Will His promises, even in the direst of circumstances, come true? The theme of hope permeated each sermon that the writer preached during his deployment. In Ps 23, believers possess hope that God will provide for them in the darkest of valleys. In Ps 42, believers have hope that, even when troubles roll over them like the ocean tide, God will command His lovingkindness to bless them. In Gen 12, believers possess the hope that, no matter where the Lord is calling them to be, they have a purpose to exist for His glory and name.

In the Romans passages[28] concerning salvation, believers possess hope that if they place their trust in the work of Jesus Christ, they will be saved for a greater purpose. In Ephesians 6, believers possess hope that if they fit themselves properly, they will be able to stand against a persistent spiritual enemy. In Psalm 34, believers have hope, because the Lord promises that His eyes, ears, and face are near to believers, as well as redeeming their souls. In John 14, believers possess the hope that Jesus will bless them if they keep His commandments.

In Mark 1, believers possess hope, because the Holy Spirit will baptize them. In Isaiah 61, believers have hope, because God has saved them for a purpose tied into His

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[28]Rom 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 9-10; and 10:13.

mission on earth. In Luke 1, believers have hope, because they can know that God has called them, even when they are required to do something that can be quite dangerous. In all of life, believers can possess a confident expectation that God will do what He promises, and that He guides and directs believers to accomplish His purposes.

Endurance. Endurance is the theme that resonates most readily to military members. Whether personal tour lengths are forty days, two months, four months, or a year, striving for the finish line is a keen reality for deployed personnel. Intricate calendars counting down the days until the member returns home are on prominent display in workcenters and housing quarters. Major events and holidays become milestones that break up a monotonous tour into digestible chunks. The writer counted off his days by weekly laundry drop-offs, along with his wife's birthday, their wedding anniversary, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Getting through these milestones was the driving factor to boost his physical endurance. The combination of fifty pounds of personal protective equipment, persistent attacks, excessive heat, and the ubiquitous monotony were serious impingements on a person's endurance. This glaring illustration translated easily into preaching, as the writer presented the topic of spiritual endurance.

Servicemen and women experience serious limitations on spiritual development during their tours. Military necessity takes precedence over personal devotions, rest, worship, and time. The typical day lasts a minimum of twelve hours. Deployed personnel are left with twelve hours to do personal errands, exercise, contact

loved ones, and sleep. One's day-off is commonly cancelled or postponed. Lest one is

committed to devotional and worship time, one often misses or ignores these disciplines.

Warding off spiritual atrophy through a vibrant unit visitation program, as well as

stressing this vital theme in preaching, became paramount in several strategic messages

throughout the deployment.

Ps 23 pronounces the concept of movement. Whether lying down, walking,

sitting, or journeying, endurance is a key to constant progression. Reliance upon the Lord

is crucial to moving forward, even in the most desperate of circumstances. In Ps 42, the

notion of prevailing, despite tremendous emotional strain, is a key point. Maintaining a

sense of panting and thirsting for God requires incredible spiritual concentration and

endurance. Endurance is a primary, underlining aspect concerning the soldier's position

in the Eph 6 message. As the writer observed from the Iraq experience, wearing the

pieces of armor for extended periods is excruciating and drains one's energy. Fatigue

cripples endurance both physically and spiritually. The double "stand," in verses thirteen

and fourteen, promotes emphasis of the concept and refers to continuous activity.[29] The

successful "stand" of American, Iraqi, and Coalition forces in Iraq requires tremendous

endurance on the part of the military members, civilian support staff, and families of

deployed members, as well as the nation that sends them. Subsequently, the notion of

endurance is seen in John 14:15 as an integral part of "keeping" the commandments of

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[29]O'Brien writes, "The admonition to acquire divine strengthening is not an end in itself: God's almighty power is required for a specific purpose, namely, that believers, both individually and together as a unity, might stand against the powers of darkness and successfully resist them. The three exhortations of vv. 10, 11, and 13, which are similar in meaning and stress the need for divine empowering, at the same time remind the readers that the devil can be resisted since God has provided all the necessary resources for the battle." O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 470.

the Lord.[30] Maintenance and protection of what the Lord has entrusted to believers is a mammoth undertaking and requires focus, concentration, and commitment.

Comfort. Wartime weighs an incredible tax on the spiritual and emotional lives of military members, spouses, children, communities, and nations. The incredible loss of thousands of lives has made an impact on the very fabric of contemporary society. Almost immediately, due to the deaths and traumatic injuries of service members, a tremendous political divide has taken shape in the United States, producing rancorous political debate. Tens of thousands of wounded and disabled veterans from OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM have transformed their families and communities. During his deployment, the writer viewed countless wounded military and civilian casualties flow through the major hospital facility at Balad.

Additionally, he performed eleven "Patriot Details," where he prayed over the remains of servicemen and women being flown back to the United States for burial. Often, fellow unit members attended these ceremonies to participate in sending their comrades back home. These experiences were commonplace for every member at Balad Air Base and were stunningly emotional. During the fall and winter of 2005, as casualties mounted, a steady stream of Blackhawk helicopters from across Iraq ferried wounded soldiers into the hospital. The noise of these aircraft provided a constant reminder of the injuries and loss of life that were a reality of military life in Iraq.

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[30]Concerning endurance, MacArthur writes, "God's blessing does not come to people who do great things, but to people who endure. Those who will receive the greatest blessing in the life to come are those who have endured the greatest suffering in the present world. The hope of blessing now and in the future glory should motivate suffering Christians to patient endurance." John MacArthur, *James* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 260.

In the midst of this turmoil, preaching on the theme of comfort proved necessary to offset the pervading reality of suffering. Particularly gripping for hospital personnel was the admittance to the hospital of Iraqi civilians from the local community who were in need of treatment. Many of these casualties, which were the product of suicide bombings, often including children, struck at the core of even the most galvanized orthodox views of God and suffering. Nothing invades the soul more than the sight of a wounded little girl and the sound of her crying cascading down the halls of a military hospital. In the midst of grotesque suffering, these discordant images required constant affirmation of a sovereign and caring God.

As the writer began to perceive these realities, the theme of comfort rose to prominence during his preaching. As he delivered his sermons, the perception of suffering and the reality of suffering caused the writer to incorporate a more pastoral tone versus a prophetic one. Recognizing the fact that several attendees worked in the military hospital evoked a shift in tone in delivery. Sensitivity and understanding of the environment in which each attendee operated was crucial in connecting with the writer's congregants to provide effective comfort through the preaching of God's Word.

The theme of comfort is found in Pss 23, 34, and 42, Isa 61, and Luke 1.[31] Underscoring God's presence and perpetual interest in His people delivered peace and rest in light of the incredible violence surrounding and penetrating the installation. The

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[31]Harris writes, "comfort . . . is a consolatory strengthening in the face of adversity that affords spiritual refreshment. It is much more than verbal solace or an expression of sympathy. While its source is always God, this comfort sometimes is mediated by fellow believers. . . . It is God, not the apostle, from whom all help and succor comes." Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 143.

realization of the comforting truth of God's eternal care came in several counseling cases that dealt with horrific experiences. After the sermon on Isaiah 61, a pilot approached the writer to receive comfort concerning his bombing of a bridge where Al-Qaeda insurgents had kidnapped a large group of civilians to utilize as human shields. Reassurance of God's judgment of the unrighteous in this case comforted the pilot and helped him reconcile this event.

Obedience. Crucial to the theme of endurance is obedience. In a deployed setting, faithful obedience to the Lord is required to ensure continuity of the believer's mission. The constricted nature of military life in a forward-deployed location, coupled with the close living conditions, amplifies a believer's life and testimony. Choosing to abandon one's heritage of faith can do considerable damage to the credibility of a believer. Protracted absence from one's spouse can intensify deployed temptation. Strain on endurance can lead to a breakdown in self-control--especially in terms of one's attitude and bearing. In the unconstrained atmosphere of the military, the choice of how one uses one's tongue in cursing or blessing becomes pronounced. Additionally, in the stricter military culture of a wartime deployment, abuse of authority and rank are more pronounced. The believer's necessity to submit to the authority of scriptural commands concerning the conduct of one's life is crucial to the successful proclamation of the Gospel. The preachers' task of exhorting congregants to be a consistent example of obedience in performance of their military duties becomes paramount.

Before one can promote obedience to Scripture, a preacher must render a decision as to whether or not the Scriptures are authoritative in all applications, or

whether or not they apply to the spiritual arena alone. Surprisingly, most military chaplains have not settled this question in their own minds.[32] Preachers lacking a firm reliance upon Scripture as profitable to military application, as stipulated by 2 Tim 3:16, find themselves adrift in attempting to encourage believers to follow the Bible's commands. No place exists for the imperative in a homiletical nightmare. Concerning authority and truth, culture stands at a crossroads. For preachers to provide the unique voice that Scripture can afford, they must believe solidly in the sufficiency of Scripture in all things--including military application.

Once one employs a proper hermeneutic concerning sufficiency, one then can speak exhortation to obedience with authority. Few places require a clear proclamation of truth more than a war zone. Whether discussing rules of conduct, treatment of the enemy, blessing enemies, relief of human suffering, or application of force, the Scriptures adjure the reader to a peculiar conduct. Each of the passages presented in this project contained an imperative in one form or another. Imperatives call for application no matter what the environment is, and these imperatives are binding. The Mark 1:8 passage particularly stressed this concept in relation to the prophetic role of believers in their various duties. The population of the writer's worship service contained another chaplain, legal representatives, pilots, nurses, and other hospital workers, guards, convoy gunners, soldiers, and various other war fighters. The writer exhorted them to proclaim truth in their various capacities when asked for advice, planning for operations, and the conduct

[32]The writer draws this observation from his twenty-six years of service with the Air Force Chaplain Corps. Over that period of time, he has listened to over sixty chaplains of different denominations preach hundreds of sermons. A chaplain who firmly believes in the sufficiency of Scripture and authority of the biblical text is the exception rather than the rule.

of war. This exhortation would have been empty had the writer believed that the Scriptures were insufficient.[33] In the military, a voice of clarity is necessary and irreplaceable.

Holiness. Coupled with obedience is the biblical concept of holiness. More than a pattern of conduct, the doctrine of holiness requires the believer to project to their fellow servicemen and women a persistent reminder of God. Central to this theme is the believer accepting his or her role as priest,[34] as outlined in 1 Pet 2:9. Because God is holy, separate, and distinct from his creation, the believer is required to be holy, separate, and distinct from the world. This truth, in combination with God's mission in Gen 12:3, Ps 34, and Isa 61, was one of the reasons for Christ dying for humanity's sin. The crucifixion was not just to save believers from the pits of hell. Additionally, the crucifixion allowed new believers to walk in the calling and purpose for which God created them. Israel, as the people of God, was to be a peculiar people. Likewise, believers at Balad Air Base, Iraq, are required to be just as peculiar for God's glory.

The military culture is a particularly brutal environment. The common language of military personnel is rife with profanity of the worst sort. Disdain for the sacred, whether deity or human life, is common, and one can witness the severe and

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[33]According to Thiessen, "The Bible carries with it the divine authority of God. It is binding upon man--on his mind, conscience, will, and heart. Man, creed, and church are all subject to the authority of Scripture. God has spoken; we must submit. The eternal 'thus saith the Lord' is our standard." Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 63.

[34]Gerritt Gustafson states, "On the day of Pentecost, a new order of Royal Priests was inaugurated which was intended to become an international priestly nation among nations. By looking at Biblical history . . . we will understand the high calling of ministry, not the Lord, and changing history through drawing near to God." Gerritt Gustofson, *Becoming a Kingdom of Priests* (Mobile, AL: Kingdom of Priests Ministries, 1988), 3.

frequent mocking of the sacred. Additionally, the initial training of military members teaches them that they are to consider the enemy as less than human and deserving of nothing but death. The weapons of warfare, including rifles, vehicles, and aircraft, are elevated to objects of veneration and worship. Additionally, military members perceive consumption of alcohol to be a requisite part of the warrior culture.

Within this milieu, not unlike the pagan world of Peter's day, the believer must provide a stark contrast to a very dark and sinister world. Here, Peter calls the believer to a lifestyle of a royal priest and member of a holy nation. He indicates that God has brought believers from darkness into a marvelous light in order that the believer might show forth the praises of God! Believers must not constrain this elocution of holiness to the chapel but must construe it in their military workcenters. This inestimable gift of holiness in the believer's life is a distinct privilege, and one must take this privilege like a mantel upon one's life.

Rom 12:1 echoes this theme when commanding believers that they must present their bodies continuously as living, holy, and acceptable sacrifices.[35] God considers the presentation of the believer's body in this manner a reasonable service for the Christian. Anything less is a wasted life. In the combat environment, one can live either as a believer or as a pagan. No middle ground exists for a Christian. Wartime makes the stresses more pronounced than in peacetime or in civilian life. No place exists

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[35]Stott continues the connection with one's priesthood when he states, "'He represents us as a priestly people, who, in responsive gratitude for God's mercy, *offer* or present our bodies as living sacrifices. These are described as both *holy* and *pleasing to God*, which seem to be the moral equivalents to being physically unblemished or without defect, and a fragrant aroma." John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001, c1994), 321.

to hide. Faking is impossible. Hypocrisy is blatantly evident in the close-quarter environment of the military member. The preacher's task is to model clearly and exhort holiness in each believer. A decision to live a holy life cements the believer's testimony, while a decision to live sinfully disintegrates the believer's witness. Holiness is the pathway of evangelism in the combat environment. Once credibility is established, one's hearers can receive the preaching of the Gospel.

Blessings One's Enemies. A third significant theme not developed and applied during the writer's deployment concerned Jesus' admonition to love one's enemies. Jesus demands that His disciples bless, do good, and pray[36] for those that curse, hate, and abuse them. In the context of Jesus' day, the tendency was to take care of one's own, while the notion of praying or caring for one's enemies was almost nonexistent.[37] Jesus was certainly referring to Lev 19:18[38] where Israel is commanded to love her neighbor. Jesus incorporates into His statement verse 17, which commanded Israel not to hate her

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[36]Found both in Matt 5:43-44 and Luke 6:27-28.

[37]"Prayer for one's persecutors (except that God would strike them dead!) had not generally characterized even the most pious in the Old Testament." Craig S. Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Matt 5:42-43, 61. Additionally, Talbert proposes that explicit commands to hate an enemy do exist in the Qumran literature in 1QS 1.3-4, 9-10 (c.f*.,* 1QS 10.17b-18; 1QM 9.21; 11QTem61.12-14). He further states that Josephus (*J.W.* 2.139), Tacitus (*Hist* 5.5) and Juvenal (*Sat*. 14.102) had the impression that Jewish hatred of others was a part of their religion. Charles Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Ethical Decision Making in Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 94.

[38]Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Leicester, England: William B. Eerdmans: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 129. Further, Kister indicates that a Palestinian Targum translates the words in Lev 19:18 AS "Love your friends who are like you." Menahem Kister, "Words and Formulae in the Gospels in the Light of Hebrew and Aramaic Sources," in *The Sermon on the Mount and its Jewish Setting*, ed. Hans-Jurgen Becker and Serge Ruzer (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie Editeurs, 2005), 128.

brother. He broadens the concept to include enemies as well, thereby attacking a

philosophy[39] that had become commonplace in Jesus' day.[40]

This command definitely applies during conflict and war. At times, the writer

realized through his prayers and preaching that he had become quite belligerent toward

the enemy.[41] This bellicose attitude became more pronounced following two attacks,

which occurred at the beginning of his worship service. No greater opportunity to

promote the concept of loving one's enemies could be had than following an attack.[42]

The writer regrets[43] the lost opportunity to differentiate between the believer's role as a

military member and as a priest of God.[44] Although faced with both a constant stream of

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[39]Berndt Schaler, "The Character and Function of the Antithesis in Matthew 5:21-48," in *The Sermon on the Mount and its Jewish Setting*, ed. Hans-Jurgen Becker and Serge Ruzer (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie Editeurs, 2005), 88.

[40]Comfort states that the disciple is not to compare his or her behavior to "cultural norms but Kingdom norms." Philip Wesley Comfort, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary with the Entire Text of the New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005-c2006), 11:93.

[41]This is a clear perversion of the imprecatory style of Psalm. John Stott writes, "As for the imprecatory psalms, in them the psalmist speaks not with any personal animosity but as a representative of God's chosen people Israel, regards the wicked as the enemies of God, counts them his own enemies only because he has completely identified himself with the cause of God, hates them because he loves God, and is so confident that this 'hatred' is 'perfect hatred' that he calls upon God in the next breath to search him and know his heart, to try him and know his thoughts, in order to see if there is any wickedness in him." John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture*, rev. ed. of *Christian Counter-Culture*, 1978, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985, c1978), 116.

[42]Bonhoeffer refers to this type of Biblical response as the "extraordinary" when he writes, "It is the life described in the beatitudes, the life of the followers of Jesus, the light which lights the word, the city set on a hill, the way of self-renunciation, of utter love for our enemies, for the unloving and the unloved, love for our religious, political and personal adversaries. In every case it is the love which was fulfilled in the cross of Christ." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1959), 137.

[43]In contrast to the writer's attitude, Job states in 31:29-30 that he has never rejoiced at the extinction of his enemies nor exalted when evil came upon them.

[44]Doriani states, "We cannot classify people. The man standing before us may be wicked, but we do not know whether he will repent or not. Remember the conversion of Paul? Once the archenemy of

kinetic and dynamic stress, attitudes of hatred and resultant vengeance are clearly not allowed.[45] The clear admonition in Rom 12:19 stipulates that vengeance belongs solely to the Lord. There must be a transfer of a person's desire to see immediate justice to their satisfaction into the hands of a more merciful, loving, and just God. Sadly, many injustices have occurred throughout United States military history, i.e., Wounded Knee, My Lai, Abu Ghraib, and Haditha. A common thread in these representative events is the desire for reprisal and revenge.

The resolution of this apparent conflict that exists between the allegiance to Jesus and His instructions for love and participation in the lethal business of the military can be found in Rom 12:18. Here, Paul's guidance seems to mitigate conflicting mandates of military service and Christian service when he states, "If it be possible, as much as liveth in you, live peaceably with all men." This exception clause allows for the possibility for violence, in the context of war, should other conditions merit the application of force. In concert with the just-war theory, adherence to rules of engagement within a theater of operations, and the ability to question what may appear to be "unlawful" orders, provide a believer confidence in the execution of his or her duties. Within moral constraints, no violation exists of even Jesus' clarification on interaction

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the church, he became its great apostle. Paul's salvation demonstrates God's 'unlimited patience.' Therefore we should be patient with sinners too." Daniel Doriani, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Character of a Disciple* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2006), 100.

[45]MacArthur states, "It is one thing to defend the honor and glory of God by seeking the defeat of His detracting enemies, but quite another to hate people personally as our own enemies. Our attitude toward even the worst pagans or heretics is to love them and pray that they will turn to God and be saved. But we also pray that, if they do not turn to Him, God will judge them and remove them in order to prepare the way for His Son Jesus Christ as the rightful ruler of this world." John MacArthur, *Matthew* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 343.

with enemies. The solution then lies with the understanding that Christians who either kill

directly or support other individuals killing, under the authority of their government and

morality will not be judged for murder or violation of the commands in Matthew.[46]

However, individuals acting outside of the parameters of command authority would result

in judgment and be held accountable by the Lord.

Prolonged War and Its Effects

Since the return of the writer and the span of time since the deployment, a

significant theme has arisen that preachers need to take into account in their ministries as

chaplains or as civilian ministers with military congregants. The effects of a prolonged

war, coupled with multiple deployments, have taken a considerable toll on military

members and their families. During the deployment, the number of counseling cases

related to marriage and family, as compared to the few combat-related cases that he

experienced, was astounding to the writer. Divorce,[47] separation, and adjustment to

reunification deserve attention in the development of the minister's preaching plans.

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[46]In one counseling situation, a pilot talked with the writer about a lethal engagement that he had conducted recently. During a mission, he received an order to fire a missile at a position where an insurgent was located. The dilemma that the pilot faced was the fact that the insurgent had gathered around him a crowd of innocent people as human shields. Comforting this airman with the truth that he was following a legal and just order, along with the fact that God would hold the insurgent accountable for the innocent lives lost, allowed this warrior to be restored to duty spiritually and mentally. Luther, although not one for acts of kindness toward the 'Papists', wrote, "In this way a Christian can easily handle the situation and his relations toward both his enemies and his friends. So far as his neighbor's person is concerned, he will love and bless everyone. But on the other hand, so far as God and His Word are concerned, he will not put up with any transgression. He must give this precedence over everything else and subordinate everything else to it, irrespective of any person, be he friend or foe; for this cause belongs neither to us nor to our neighbor, but to God, whom it is our duty to obey before anything else." Luther, *Sermon on the Mount and the Magnificat*, 21:121.

[47]A recent article states that the divorce rate in the military is at a higher rate than at any time in the last sixteen years. "Divorce Rates Climb" [on-line]; accessed 8 December 2008; available from http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/12/gns_Divorcerates_120308w/; Internet.

Providing a theological answer to family crises that result from multiple deployments is critical. Additionally, increases in the effects of Post Traumatic Stress and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder[48] have affected the lives of deployed members.[49]

Final evidence of the trauma of twenty-first-century combat will not be realized until years into the future. However, the effects of war on the veteran are pronounced. Sensitivity to the emotional and spiritual scars of returning veterans, as well as providing effective remedies in critical incident stress management, is necessary. Permanent damage perpetrated in the minds of veterans necessitates spiritual healing and relief. Messages providing comfort to the war fighters, justifying their sacrifices for the greater good, would deliver hope and assurance. Further, combat veterans should be provided with individual ministry and counseling to ensure that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder has not crippled believers with its effects. In essence, ministry to combat soldiers, airmen, sailors, or Marines should not end with their return from the combat zone.

Summary

The necessity for authoritative, compassionate, and compelling preaching is pronounced with regard to military members and conflict. A firm belief in the sufficiency of Scriptures delivers a platform from which one can execute exhortation and

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[48]Glenn Schiraldi defines Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as that which "results from exposure to an overwhelmingly stressful event or series of events, such as war, rape, or abuse. It is a normal response by normal people to an abnormal situation." Glenn R. Schiraldi, *The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Sourcebook: A Guide to Healing, Recover, and Growth* (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishers, 2000), 3.

[49]Pentagon sources state that at least thirty percent of military members returning from Iraq suffer from some form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. "PTSD Rates Soar" [on-line]; accessed 8

encouragement along the trajectory of themes that the writer has identified. Resolute dependency on exposition and exegesis is crucial to the proclamation of truth within the military context. The preacher must develop a definite and concise preaching strategy before deployment. This plan requires flexibility to adjust as situations and the environment dictate. Vigilance in the delivery of biblical pastoral care can yield tremendous insight in relation to undiscovered themes necessary to produce effective ministry in a combat environment.

A thematic and expositional preaching plan is necessary, as demonstrated by the unique and comprehensive needs of military members and civilian contractors deployed to a combat environment. Based upon the reactions and observations by the writer's hearers, it became evident that the Bible supplied the encouragement and strength needed beyond measure. The writer's thesis became more poignant upon observation of other chaplains and their treatment of the Bible in their preaching. The changing needs of military requirements and the American culture necessitate proclamation of the inspired biblical text. The writer's personal experiences of over twenty-five years in the Air Force Chaplain Corps underscore the dramatic need for chaplains who are dedicated to preaching the Word.

December 2008; available from http://ohmygov.com/blogs/a-day-in-the-life/archive/2008/05/28/ ptsd-rates-soar-in-military.aspx; Internet.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS BY
MILITARY MEMBERS

The writer enlisted several attendees of his service to provide feedback on the

sermons that he delivered. The comments were valuable to the writer, as each of these

individuals performed duties that placed incredible demands upon their time. The writer

did not receive consistent comments by all enlistees, but accepted a steady stream of

evaluation, which guided him and helped him adjust his delivery, illustrations, and other

homiletical approaches. His hearers included a broad range of disciplines, including his

supervisor, the senior enlisted chaplain assistant, an officer in charge of a gun truck unit

(these gun trucks guarded the civilian convoys that traveled throughout Iraq and were

subject to persistent attacks by improvised explosive and penetrating devices), the senior

Air Force paralegal, and an Army sergeant (who, due to her demanding duties, provided

little formal feedback).

After approval to proceed with this project, the writer sent an invitation to the

aforementioned individuals to provide weekly feedback to his messages. The writer

sought an answer to four questions in relation to his sermons. The first question evaluated

whether or not the text of the message was relevant to their experiences in Iraq. The

second question related to what the preacher did well during his sermon. The third

question concerned what the preacher needed to do to improve his messages. The final

question entailed the respondent providing needs and issues to be addressed in future messages. These comments are priceless to the writer, memorializing congregants in the midst of their struggles, fears, and hopes in the midst of a highly stressful combat deployment. The chaplain is eternally grateful for the privilege of ministering to these American heroes. The writer will proceed chronologically with a summary of the respondents' answers to the first three questions. The final paragraph of this chapter will summarize the needs and issues provided by the fourth question.

September 11--Psalm 23

Several respondents stated that this message was highly relevant to their experiences in Iraq. Appreciation of the memorial to September 11, 2001 sharpened the resolve of those attending to the reality of why they were in Iraq. However, mention was made of the writer's stiff style and the need to "let go and preach." The writer attributed this stiffness to general nervousness and being in a new environment.

September 18--Psalm 42

The preacher was congratulated for the insightful discussion of "thirsting and panting" for God in the midst of desperate situations. Several critiques pointed to the writer speaking rather "academically." Initially, the chaplain spoke from manuscripted messages. After two people gave remarks regarding delivery, the speaker purposed to move toward a more free-flowing style of speaking.

September 24--Genesis 12:1-3

General consensus on this message was that the sermon pointed believers away from themselves to their broader missions. One respondent stated that a believer could do very little with regard to open evangelism in a Muslim country, but he or she could do many practical things in the areas of prayer and exhibiting a Christ-like attitude to the many third-country nationals present on the installation. Respondents gave appreciation for the writer's verse-by-verse exposition and delivery of the sermon.

October 2--The Roman Road

With communion being the focus of the service, several respondents mentioned that the importance of fellowship and communion were vital in a combat environment. Greater appreciation was given for the change in approach by the preacher in his delivery style and enthusiasm. Several comments still critiqued him regarding his tendency to speak in a more academic fashion rather than sharing personally with the audience. Additionally, some made comments requesting that the writer cease from self-deprecating humor. They viewed the humor as a distraction from the proclamation of the Word.

October 16--Ephesians 6:10-18

General consensus was that the text selection was a wonderful choice and held incredible applicability to the current environment and situation. One respondent stated that the sermon made her think about the spiritual battle about which one often forgets. Additionally, this respondent mentioned that, due to exegesis and exposition of the text, she gleaned new meaning from the text, which encouraged her. The material, which

related to the need of Christians to bind together as a unit, resonated with several of the respondents. Another respondent mentioned that the writer presented the sermon in a manner that held his interest and complimented the use of current body armor to illustrate the biblical text.

October 23, 30, and November 6--Psalm 34

The respondents viewed this sermon as a message that explained clearly how Christians could share their faith and remain in compliance with Air Force regulations prohibiting proselytizing. The sermon clarified ways through which the Gospel could be communicated through attitudes, language, conduct, and bearing. One respondent appreciated the way the writer helped the listener understand how to balance scriptural commands to be in submission to authorities on earth and to spread the Gospel. Another respondent appreciated how the preacher challenged congregants in a manner that was inspiring through helping him understand truly how to magnify the Lord at Balad Air Base. The writer received approval for preaching this series over three Sundays, which allowed a more thorough treatment of the text. The writer's approach in having the congregants focus on one application during the week was quite effective to one listener. Others listed personal anecdotes as providing a personal approach to the message. The writer's supervisor designated this series of messages as the best preached over the course of the deployment.

November 20--John 14:15

One respondent remarked that the writer did an effective job of utilizing military photographs that related to the different meanings of the word "keep." She stated

that approaching preaching with an approach likened to a parable was most impressive. Another respondent stated that the preacher's approach of identification with the congregation was excellent. He did this through a transparent approach of self-disclosure concerning personal struggles and temptations--a much preferred approach to self-deprecating humor. Further, another respondent complimented the writer on inclusion of chaplaincy duties in his sermon (for instance, unit visitation). Of particular note, was tying in the word "keep" with the various jobs of the aircraft maintenance group. Another respondent shared that the writer was prepared always and that he preached with confidence and conviction.

Several comments, however, requested that the chaplain not focus on Iraq as much. These respondents remarked that the writer tended to lean too heavily on relevance to the contemporary situation with very little mention of home, the past, or the future. These comments indicated they would appreciate more a broader application of the passages. These pronounced comments came at a time of the typical mid-tour slump experienced by many military members.

December 4--Mark 1:1-8

Once again, the reviewers complimented the writer for tying the text of the message with the experiences of fellow servicemen and women at Balad. They gave appreciation concerning the inclusion of Advent messages in the preacher's sermon rotation. One respondent stated that he appreciated how he was inspired to have a ministry similar to John the Baptist for the remainder of his tour. Another listener felt that the writer preached with excitement, remarking that the sermon was "Spirit-filled."

Further, he stated the writer injected clear, passionate, spontaneous thoughts on history and religion.

December 11--Isaiah 61

Once again, the preacher received praise for his relevancy to the situation in Iraq as well as the military environment. He demonstrated this relevancy through his treatment of how Isaiah 61 was, in effect, Jesus' mission statement.

December 18--Luke 1:26-38

The writer received no formal feedback from this message. Informally, the writer received numerous compliments after the service for his efforts and appreciation for his pulpit ministry over the deployment. As this was his last message, the congregation took time at the end of the service to extend gratitude to the preacher. The lack of feedback was no surprise, as for many of the respondents, this was close to the time of departure, and their thoughts were toward home and family.

General Observations

The respondents suggested several themes that the writer had not anticipated. Spiritual leadership, the battle between good and evil, fearing the Lord, seeking peace, turning from evil, maintaining relationships back home, maintaining purity, and effective prayer were ideas presented by the respondents. Overall, much satisfaction was expressed for the trajectory of the writer's preaching approach.

Based upon this feedback, it is evident that a focused and comprehensive preaching plan, which addressed targeted perceived and actual spiritual emotional needs

of the congregants was validated. The hearers and other attendees left the services

encouraged and strengthened for the week before them. Stability in service attendance

was linked directly to the exegetical presentation of the Word, while other services that

haphazardly approached the Bible faced a more transient community. For many

attendees, the Sunday worship service was an event cherished and appreciated during

their deployment. All chaplains must recognize the fact that exacting attention to their

pulpit ministries is as important, or at times, more important than other duties they

perform.

CHAPTER 6

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER
IMPLEMENTATION

As a result of this project, the writer believes that several major and minor

projects can be adapted. These projects have the potential of both challenging and

encouraging chaplaincy ministry, as well as broader Christian ministry, in relation to

preaching preparation and planning. The writer would like to explore a multi-layered

approach in further discussion of the topics raised by this project that would speak to

ministers and believers across Christian disciplines. He will accomplish this through the

publication of articles and books, lecture series, and participation in military and civilian

workshops.

The first project the writer would seek to undertake is writing a journal article

relating to preaching preparation, to publish in several military journals related to the

chaplaincy ministry. This type of material is noticeably absent, as evidenced by both

literature reviews conducted by the writer. This article would deal primarily with the need

for proper reflection and preparation of a sermon plan, based on attempting to meet

perceived emotional and spiritual needs of servicemen and women deployed in a combat

environment. The writer will discuss the various texts he selected before his deployment

and provide a brief reflection on his post-deployment discovery of needed themes. The

audience of this article would be primarily Army chaplains, who publish the only military

chaplain's journal. However, he will make additional distributions of the article to the Chiefs of Chaplains for the Navy and Air Force.

Second, the writer would seek to publish a devotional book highlighting his preaching at Balad Air Base, Iraq. His plans are for this book to provide a more personal reflection of the texts he selected, interspersed with memories, blog entries, and photographs of his deployment. The purpose would be to share the preacher's struggle to provide meaningful ministry to deployed military members. The book would attempt to persuade its readers of the sufficiency of the Bible to their particular life situations. Drawing upon the rich experience of the deployment will illustrate and underscore the central place of Scripture throughout the writer's tour-of-duty.

The third project the writer would publish would be a detailed exegesis of Psalm 34. The writer found this Psalm to be crucial in outlining a believer's purpose of existence. Thoroughly exegetical and expositional, the book would take a particularly devotional tone, attempting to knit together the deeper truths of the text and the daily lives of the readers. The writer will outline the book in the same manner as the writer's three sermons. The first section will deal primarily with defining the magnification and glorification of God. The second section will deal with the nine ways that Psalm 34 suggests how one can magnify and glorify God. The final section will focus on why one should glorify and magnify God. Further, the writer views the possibility of future volumes from the Psalms, particularly Pss 23, 42, and 91.

In a fourth project, the writer will develop a cross-cultural ministry book incorporating many of the themes that the writer preached during his deployment. Currently, the writer teaches a course on crosscultural ministry at Arlington Baptist

College, wherein he utilizes much of his chaplaincy ministry to teach effective

crosscultural ministry to his students. He will draw the content of this book from his class

lectures and sermons preached in Iraq. The book's title and thesis will stress the

believers' calls to be visible reminders of the glory of God in the stations of life where

God has placed them. The chapters of the book will concentrate on a particular lifestyle

calling--worship, prayer, suffering, blessing, integrity, servanthood, excellence,

preparation, vision, influence, experiencing God, and community. The thrust of the book

would be to incorporate biblical texts that stress these lifestyles and exhort believers to

live out their faith in their various capacities.

Additionally, the writer would seek to develop a four-day professional

development experience for military chaplains relative to his thesis. The seminar would

introduce younger chaplains to the deployment experience, context, and approaches to

the preparation of sermonic material for the deployed location. Discussion of homiletical

theory and bibliology would invite consideration of the idea of scriptural authority and

sufficiency. Written exercises walking attendees through the process of preparation for

deployment, deployment, and post-deployment evaluation of the preaching task would be

required. One pre-seminar project would be the listing of deployment themes, as well as

potential biblical texts, which would provide a growing database from which chaplains of

all branches of services could draw for future deployments.

Further, the writer will offer training material to each of the services' basic

chaplain courses focused on proclamation and preaching within the military context.

From the writer's observation, the general perception concerning preaching appears to

center on the chaplain's seminary education and civilian pastoral experiences. Although

instrumental in developing a minister's preaching, these two sources provide little

contextual awareness of unique aspects of military culture and experiences--especially in

relation to the combat experience. The current chaplaincy course curriculum for the

Army, Navy, and Air Force contains only minimal discussion of this vital component of

the chaplain's ministry. The writer would seek to overcome the general hostility toward

exegetical and expositional preaching through education and instruction.

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A COMPREHENSIVE THEMATIC AND EXEGETICAL PREACHING

PLAN FOR SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN ASSIGNED

TO A COMBAT ENVIRONMENT

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A Prospectus

Presented to

the Doctor of Ministry Committee

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

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by

Mark A. McDaniel

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INTRODUCTION

The author's contention is that, in the twenty-first century, one of the

challenges for Christianity will be the authority of the Bible and its place in the lives of

Christians. As postmodernism becomes the predominant cultural philosophy, relevancy

in decision making, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs will control our society more and

more. As the culture embraces postmodernism, God's Word will no longer serve as the

predominate worldview through which believers interpret, evaluate, and affect changes in

their lives. The great struggle will be in finding the connection between the biblical text,

a person's value system, and decision-making processes.

Thesis

This prospectus will argue that preaching to military members at Balad Air

Base, Iraq, during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM provides compelling challenges,

requiring a focused and comprehensive preaching plan that incorporates messages

focused on salvation, hope, and endurance. Preaching that ministers to the needs of

military members requires deep theological reflection based upon the unique context

provided by a combat zone. A haphazard and slothful approach to text selection and

sermonic material minimizes the chaplain's ministry and disconnects him or her from

ministering effectively to the needs of deployed members.

Tentative Table of Contents

Chapter

MINISTRY NEED AND PLAN

For those called to teach and preach God's Word, the new millennium will require a keen awareness of rapid cultural changes, as well as a growing relativistic societal philosophy that is skeptical of an authoritative scripture. Not all is bleak. Along with the flagrant skepticism and demands for relevancy, an acute societal hunger for truth is present. When the Bible becomes the source for answers to a seeking generation, a powerful connection develops. Therefore, for preachers and teachers of the Word, the days of haphazard messages or lesson preparation are gone. An ad hoc approach to dispensing God's Word to God's people is unacceptable. The crisis of acceptance is too critical for substandard approaches to proclamation. Today's ministers must focus on society's need for sound, solid, and relevant exposition of the Bible.

Ministry Need

This dynamic need for connection can be no more relevant than in the United States military. The author has spent over twenty-three years serving on active and reserve duty in the United States Air Force in the chaplaincy service. Since the majority of Air Force personnel are between the ages of twenty and thirty, rapid changes of culture are more pronounced. With a higher concentration of younger men and women in the service, a tremendous opportunity exists to connect the needs of Air Force personnel with the truths of the Bible.

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the culture of the Air Force has endured fundamental changes. Before that momentous day, the Air Force was in the process of drawing down from Cold War levels. Separation from family was limited as the only major crises in the world at that time were OPERATIONS NORTHERN and

SOUTHERN WATCH, which dealt with the containment of Iraq, as well as a continued presence in Cuba, South Korea, and the Balkans. These contingency operations were fairly stable and predictable missions. Other than the pilots' exposure to anti-aircraft fire, the majority of Air Force personnel did not find themselves under direct fire. After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States president authorized the Global War against Terrorism. Within a short period-of-time, Air Force personnel deployed to the frontlines of the global war against terror and found themselves deep in enemy territory throughout Iraq, Afghanistan, and other parts of the world. These deployments created additional stress to deployed Air Force members and their families.

<div align="center">**Ministry Plan**</div>

Ministering to military members and their families during this new era provides a unique opportunity for chaplains to connect the Bible to the chaotic and unstable military environment in which these people live. As the battle space becomes more violent and less defined, and as Air Force personnel face a greater measure of fear, anxiety, and apprehension than ever before, the need of assurance, security, and a sense of purpose increases.

The deployed military chaplain must adopt an intentional approach toward ministry by focusing upon the relevancy and surety of God's Word, which can provide the sense of peace that deployed military members seek. Proclamation provides the central delivery point of biblical truth. Therefore, an intentional and comprehensive preaching plan, which incorporates messages focused on salvation, hope, and endurance is necessary for the military chaplain to meet the challenges of the new era.

The writer has been tasked to deploy in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM to the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, located at Balad Air Base, Iraq. During the four-month deployment, the writer's assignment is to serve personnel from his assigned stateside unit, the 301st Fighter Wing, located at the Joint Reserve Base, Naval Air Station, Fort Worth, Texas, as well as three thousand other active duty and reserve personnel. The Air Force units are assigned to Air Expeditionary Force Cycles and "buckets" of availability. These "buckets" mean that Air Force personnel are vulnerable to be tasked for deployment every fifteen months. Although this deployment schedule does not compare with the interminable one-year tasking for the Army and Marines, the change to an expeditionary Air Force versus steady-state Air Force provides unique stressors.

Balad Air Base is part of a mammoth installation called Logistic Support Area "Anaconda." This sprawling fourteen square-mile base houses around twenty-four thousand United States Army personnel as well as civilian contractors, third-country nationals, and Iraqi contractors. While forty-four Army chaplains are assigned to minister to these personnel, only five chaplains are assigned to minister to the Air Force personnel.

Within this environment, the writer will assume chaplain duties that encompass unit visitation with the 332nd Air Expeditionary Maintenance Group, counseling, staff work, and serving as pastor of one of the three non-Catholic worship services. While the other activities will provide meaningful ministry, the preaching task will provide the writer the opportunity to intersect the Bible with the new stresses of those attending the worship service.

In preparation for the deployment, the writer understands the necessity of developing a preaching plan. Within this preaching plan, the author will seek to incorporate the biblical themes of salvation, hope, endurance, and a God-centered life. As centerpieces of a deployed military theology, these themes will attempt to stress, through relevant texts, a robust and comprehensive worldview of exaltation and dependence upon God's rich grace, mercy, and peace. Through vibrant exposition of key passages, the writer will strive to impart a sense of hope to personnel serving in dangerous and hostile environments.

As the deployment will encompass Thanksgiving and Christmas, a unique opportunity will arise, enabling the writer to connect the present deployed reality to these holidays, which evoke deep family ties and spiritual meaning. In regard to the Christmas season, the writer will tap into the rich resource of the Lectionary in selecting passages that accentuate his desired themes. The writer's assignment to one of the worship services provides the availability of a ready platform through which to share these sermons.

As part of the evaluation process, the writer will perform an analysis of themes, which military chaplains have utilized in previous American conflicts. Additionally, he will establish a menu of themes through analysis of these sermons. Although the preaching choices of the writer will not be driven solely by analysis of past preaching in conflict, he hopes to discover themes that would be beneficial to deployed members in a combat environment. An ongoing evaluation by a control group within the worship service will serve as a second tool with which the writer will select his sermon texts. The writer will choose five individuals to provide feedback on the messages he preaches. He

will give these individuals the opportunity to suggest other topics relevant to their perceived needs.

Obstacles

Obvious obstacles could pose challenges to implementation of the preaching plan. The first obstacle is that this deployment will be unique for the writer. During his career, the writer has deployed twice, first during the 1991 Gulf War to Europe and, second, to a humanitarian assignment at the American Navy Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM will serve as the first combat deployment in the writer's career. Without combat zone experience, the writer is limited to gathering themes from chaplains who have experienced previous deployment, or presuming upon which themes would minister effectively to deployed personnel.

A second obstacle is an exposure to the wider military culture. In addition to reservists, Logistic Support Area Anaconda and Balad Air Base house active duty and reserve Army, Marines, Navy, and civilian contractors. Each of these branches of service possesses a unique culture and traditions with which the writer has had limited exposure. Further, each branch's exposure to the combat environment in Iraq will occur in various ways. Likely, this will produce a variety of unique stresses and anxieties. Producing a relative sermon each week, that will minister to the needs of such a diverse group of congregants, may prove challenging.

A third obstacle is the shrinking number of people who identify with a specific religious denomination or faith. Fewer and fewer people in contemporary culture actually attend a church service, and this trend is mirrored in the United States Air Force. If these circumstances are demonstrated at Balad Air Base, Iraq, then the writer will be faced with

spreading the message into the community, requiring him to "preach" his sermons not only in the chapel, but also through unit visitation, counseling, and ministry of presence.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The writer was surprised at the limited material available on preaching in a combat environment. A significant disappointment is that surrounding the fact that, despite the voluminous material on the military chaplaincy, very little information existed that was actually germane to the topic-at-hand. However, the writer did find significant works related to the topic of preaching in a combat zone during a time of war.

Interestingly, no books were published regarding the chaplain's role in combat, or the role of proclamation to the troops following World War II. The specific journals to the chaplaincy services focused mainly on returning troops and their transition to civilian life. With the number of chaplains serving in the war, that an opportunity to provide material for preaching in future conflicts was not realized is regrettable. Remarkably, even after the events of September 11, 2001 and two combat operations in the Global War on Terrorism, even less materials are available. The writer located two pertinent dissertations emphasizing preparation for combat. However, minimal treatment about the preaching task existed in these works. For these reasons, the writer will summarize the material available from publications, dissertations, and journal articles that provides meaningful background and information relevant to the writer's discussion.

Publications

The writer began by reviewing the appropriate service manuals related to the chaplaincy service. This proved to be useful in describing the qualifications and basic

duties of a chaplain. Additional resources included a significant historical treatment of

the development of the military chaplaincy from the first through the twenty-first

centuries, with particular focus on theological themes addressed by chaplains.[1] The writer

reviewed several titles concerning specific historical American wars. The manuscript

from eight lectures delivered at Yale University after the conclusion of World War I,

dealing with the specific topic of war and preaching, is of particular note.[2] Addressing the

chaplain's duties and the role of a preacher in combat, the book is seminal for evaluation

and discussion of the writer's thesis.

A book published after the Korean conflict proved to be very meaningful to

this research.[3] Of particular note is the author's chapter on the high standards that

military chaplains must meet. In this discussion, the author provides a good bit of

material on a chaplain's preparation for ministry during combat. Additionally, he

promotes the idea of expository sermons, in his chapter on the chaplain's services.

Further, he suggests an exhaustive list of texts as themes for sermons. In his chapter

concerning the chaplain's combat duties, the author provides a wonderful section on

preparing men for combat.

The final text reviewed by the writer was a volume written after the conclusion

of the Vietnam conflict.[4] The author insightfully describes the need of preaching in the

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[1]Doris L. Bergen, ed., *The Sword of the Lord* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004).

[2]John Kelman, *The War and Preaching* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1919).

[3]Stanley Anderson, *Shepherds to 24,000,000 Service Men* (Butler: Higley Press, 1954).

[4]Wayne Dehoney, *Disciples in Uniform* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1967).

combat environment. In addition, he addresses the unique nature of the Vietnam War, which bears some striking familiarity with the issues faced by military members during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. Further, he discusses the struggle to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people and the frustration experienced by many military members. Additionally, he focuses on the importance of the chapel and the chaplain's presence among the troops.

The most applicable publication, related to preaching in a modern combat zone, was written by Navy Chaplain Carey H. Cash.[5] This text is the dramatic account of Cash's ministry to the 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, which was the first Marine unit to enter into Baghdad after the invasion of Iraq by the United States in April of 2003. Although the Marine context described in Cash's book is remarkably different from the environment at Balad Air Base, the writer found tremendous value in the author's description of how he prepared himself, his family, and his marines for the rigors of combat. Of particular value was the author's persistent discussion of preaching in a combat zone and the biblical texts selected for that purpose. This text should be mandatory reading at each of the military service's chaplain schools.

Dissertations

Review of applicable dissertations yielded some meaningful material. Sadly, very little in the case of publications has been written on the topic of preaching, let alone preaching in a combat zone. This has yielded a disturbing trend in chaplaincy literature. The majority of dissertations, written by chaplains, relate to garrison or home-base,

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[5]Carey Cash, *A Table in the Presence* (Waco: Word Publishing Group, 2004).

ministries. Among these, the majority relate to counseling or other pastoral ministry related programs. Noticeably lacking is any treatment on proclamation, either in garrison or in a deployed setting.

The writer reviewed one useful dissertation concerning the challenges of establishing the chaplaincy during the Civil War period.[6] Of particular importance is William Dickens's treatment of the impact of the Civil War chaplaincy. In this central chapter, the author relates the challenges of military chaplaincy and the various aspects of ministry done while under enemy fire in the camp. The author sprinkles insightful quotes regarding the preaching by Civil War chaplains throughout the chapter. This particular chapter provides significant guidance for chaplains in wartime.

Additionally, the writer reviewed two dissertations dealing with the development of the Canadian Chaplain Service. In the first dissertation,[7] the author reviews the development of the chaplaincy service in Canada from its militia beginnings through World War I. In surveying the various struggles that the Canadian Chaplain Service endured in forging its identity, the author moves the reader through the establishment of chaplains away from the battlefield in Europe to their involvement on the frontlines. This work develops the identity of a combat chaplain and provides invaluable material to the writer through exploration of the importance of preparation for deployment.

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[6]William Dickens, "The Standardization of the Military Chaplaincy During the American Civil War" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), 1998.

[7]Thomas Hamilton, "Padres Under Fire: A Study of the Canadian Chaplain Services in the Second World War" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto), 2003.

In the second dissertation,[8] the author charts the development of the Canadian Chaplain Services in World War II. The author gives a description of the historical treatment of earlier struggles in beginning the chaplaincy service. In addition, the author provides an extensive discussion of transforming civilian ministers to the military chaplaincy. The latter chapters describe the efforts by which chaplains fostered credibility with their troops before D-Day. Additional, he focuses on the role of the chaplain in combat.

The writer reviewed two final dissertations, which dealt with the idea of preparation and how institutional culture is fostered by the chaplaincy. In the first dissertation,[9] the author discussed the importance of preparation, describing the situation in which a chaplain would deploy. Additionally, this is the first dissertation written on the subject of a chaplain preparing for combat in the post-September 11, 2001 era.

In the second dissertation,[10] the author outlines the ways in which chaplains impact military culture and bring biblical applications of truth to it. The author accomplishes this deftly by a series of questions related to the purpose and function of the chaplaincy. As Johnston answers the question concerning the purpose of the chaplain, he explores the perspective of the "warrior-worshipper" who attends the chapel. Additionally, the author explores the various roles of the chaplain, including preaching.

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[8]Duff Crerar, "The Padre in No Man's Land: Canadian Military Chaplains, 1866-1939 (World War I, Chaplains)" (Ph.D. diss., Queen's University at Kingston), 1989.

[9]Oscar Arauco, "A Chaplain's Preparation for Combat: A Primer on How to Prepare for Combat Ministry" (Ph.D. diss., United States Army Command and General Staff College), 2005.

[10]Mark Johnston, "Behind the Wire: The Chaplain as a Catalyst for Spiritual and Social Change Within the Military Culture: A Multidimensional Model with Selected Programs for Ministry" (Ph.D. diss., Regent University), 2002.

He discusses the three phases of a combat deployment: prewar, war, and postwar,

offering an analysis for each of the phases with the intent of preparing a chaplain for

venturing into a combat arena. The author focuses on Christian attitudes toward war and

how the chaplain can be a bridge between the horrors of war and the goodness of God.

Periodicals

With continuing disappointment, the writer found very little in the abundance

of military chaplain journals dealing with the topic of preaching or preaching in a combat

zone. This was true especially following the end of World War II. The writer's survey of

books, dissertations, and periodicals has affirmed the writer's assumption. During

twenty-three years of chaplaincy service, the writer has noted a diminished view of

proclamation. Although people have written articles on the technical art of proclamation,

civilian homileticians have written them. These homileticians have failed to address the

impact of proclamation in the military context. With that being stated, the writer did find

a few articles relevant to his thesis.

In an article related to the transition from the civilian pulpit to the military

pulpit,[11] the author discusses the massive transition that one must make, particularly in

the preaching arena, from the civilian pulpit to the military pulpit. Military preachers face

a vista drastically different from that of their civilian counterparts. The challenges that the

Bible needs to address are, in some cases, more acute and pronounced than in daily

civilian life. Military members in harm's way require unique ministry to which the

civilian minister is unaccustomed. Additionally, the military preacher faces an

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[11]Peter Baktis, "Transition from Civilian Preaching to Preaching in a Military Environment," *Army Chaplaincy* (Winter-Spring 2002): 10-13.

increasingly pluralistic environment, posing its own set of difficulties that the denominational minister does not face. Further, the military culture is so unique that only one who has "walked in the shoes" of the military can provide ministry effectively. This article provides a unique perspective on an issue that is vitally important.

In an article discussing the theology of the military chaplaincy,[12] the author outlines three contexts in which the chaplain must minister. First, he advocates the need for chaplains to be adept at addressing soldiers' needs in the context of war. The author does an admirable job of delineating the various military needs that the chaplain must address. A second ministry context for the military chaplain is in the arena of training and the need for a chaplain's presence during the development of the trainee. The third context of the military chaplain is the institution itself. The author makes a salient point in that the chaplain brings a sense of civility to a brutal environment.

In an article covering the field preaching experience,[13] the author promotes an effective preaching ministry in the "field," or deployed location. The author promotes the idea of the "listening" chaplain, as well one who is nonjudgmental. This is because many attendees of a field service would not attend church normally. He points out rightly that soldiers come to the chapel to receive something substantial or to address a specific need. This underscores the difference between preaching to a military audience and a civilian one. The author provides helpful and relevant advice on the preparation and delivery of the field sermon itself.

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[12]William Noble, "In the Shadow of Death: A Theology for the Church's Military Chaplaincy," *Army Chaplaincy* (Winter-Spring 2002): 79-82.

[13]David Smartt, "The Field Preaching Experience," *Military Chaplains' Review* (Winter 1986): 15-21.

In an article on the chaplain's message,[14] the author provides a more general review of preaching principles. Of particular note, the author points out that military preaching must be "incarnational." This promotes the idea of bringing the message to the listener and making theology practical in every aspect through "incarnate imagery." Although more academic in tone, the article promotes a key ingredient in military preaching.

One of the most enlightening articles the writer reviewed included a letter written by a commander to an incoming chaplain.[15] This insightful letter underscores the tremendous value that a chaplain can gain from his commander's expectations. This particular commander underscores the value of a chaplain for the unit. First, he stresses the importance that the chaplain be a "man of God." This attribute lends credibility to the preaching ministry of the chaplain. The commander's letter provides a legitimate job description for a military chaplain and addresses all of the roles that a chaplain should fulfill. Every chaplaincy course for all branches of service should utilize this letter.

An Army chaplain wrote a particularly illuminating article after the first Gulf War. This article is one of several written by Army chaplains deployed to Saudi Arabia during OPERATION DESERT STORM.[16] Although most of the stories were anecdotal at best, Donald Myers's diary provided insight into the needs of various patients to which he ministered. After a description of five patients, the author shares the lessons that he

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[14]Max Nuscher, "The Chaplain's Message," *Military Chaplains' Review* (Spring 1978): 93-101.

[15]Quay Snyder, "What Does the Commander Expect from the Chaplain?" *Military Chaplains' Review* (Fall 1977): 5-9.

[16]Donald Myers, "Desert Storm Diary," *Military Chaplains' Review* (August 1991): 21-43.

learned from ministering to each of these unique patients. These lessons provide insight into the kinds of themes that a deployed chaplain can choose to preach.

A final article, reviewed by the writer, concerns the paradox of the military chaplaincy.[17] The author does an admirable job of presenting the paradoxes faced by military chaplains. This article lists eight of these paradoxes: (1) representing Jesus in a brutal line of work; (2) tensions created by his noncombatant role; (3) the tension of being loyal to the church and state; (4) being a minister and an officer; (5) the tension of being priestly and social; (6) reinforcing the morale of soldiers so they may kill others; (7) the limitation on the prophetic role of the chaplain; and (8) the use of religious and chivalric imagery. This article offers a variety of preaching texts and themes, as well as instruction for chaplains regarding possible struggles that they may have in the chaplaincy service.

<div align="center">THEOLOGICAL ISSUES</div>

Deployment is a significant, life-altering event that challenges preconceived theological notions. Military deployment into a combat zone forces a believer to rethink issues that previously had been assented intellectually. Insecurity, displacement from comfortable and familiar surroundings, the constant threat of mortar and rocket attack, an exotic environment, as well as separation from family and friends test long-held theological assumptions. The crucible of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM will force believers, including the writer, to reevaluate preconceived theological notions.

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[17]Alan Wilkinson, "The Paradox of the Military Chaplaincy," *Theology* 84 (July 1981): 249-57.

This mission will be the first combat deployment directly in a war zone for the members of the 301st Fighter Wing. The base itself is located in the heart of the Sunni Triangle, a hotbed of Al-Qaeda activity. Al-Qaeda and national insurgents in this area seek to kill as many members of Coalition Forces as possible, in order to end the new government in Iraq, spurring a civil war throughout the nation of Iraq. They accomplish these ends through brutal and horrific means. Balad Air Base has been dubbed unofficially, "Mortar-itaville," due to the persistent attacks by mortars and rocket fire. Since the Vietnam conflict, Air Force personnel have not encountered this type of activity.

In this venue, the writer will seek to minister to deployed members facing the theological turmoil sparked by such an environment. Before the deployment, the writer will construct a preaching plan to address the major theological issues brought about by one's tour of duty at Balad Air Base, Iraq. The writer's hope is that through the preaching plan, he can achieve all of the pertinent theological issues. The writer decided that an ad hoc approach to sermon texts and titles would simply not be sufficient. Additionally, since the deployment would occur during the Advent and Christmas seasons of the church year, he would choose texts from the Lectionary in order to investigate the merit of the Lectionary as a preaching resource in a combat environment. The writer settled on dealing with the themes of God's sovereignty, hope, endurance, comfort, obedience, and holiness, in addition to salvation and the believer's purpose. These themes were realized through the following passages: Psalm 23, Psalm 42, Genesis 12:1-3, the "Roman Road to Salvation" passages, Ephesians 6:10-18, Psalm 34, John 14:15, Mark 1:1-8, Isaiah 61, and Luke 1:26-38.

Additionally, before the deployment, the writer was tasked with conducting an Interfaith Community Thanksgiving Service. This task provides a unique opportunity to share biblical truth in an ecumenical and interfaith environment. Further, the writer's plans were to preach a sermon on Christmas Day related to connecting Christmas to Easter. This service was cancelled due to the visit of the Chief of Chaplains of the United States Air Force. The writer's hope is that through the combination of text selection, reflection, exegesis, and theological application, deployed members, along with the writer, will grow and gain strength in their faith.

Pertinent to the development of this preaching plan is a strong adherence to the belief that Scripture is adequate and sufficient to address the perceived theological needs of military and civilian personnel assigned to a forward-operating area. Are the Scriptures, written close to two thousand years ago, relevant to the combat soldier and airman of the twenty-first century? According to D. A. Carson, "philosophical pluralism," which has become a dominant viewpoint in relation to the concept of authority,[18] "supports one stance: namely, that any notion that a particular ideological or religious claim is intrinsically superior to another is necessarily wrong."[19] With the military reflective of American culture,[20] a challenge to promote the sufficiency of

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[18]Gallup Poll "Twenty-eight Percent Believe Bible Is Actually the Word of God" (May 26, 2006) [on-line]; accessed 20 October 2006; available from http:www.galluppoll.com/content/?ci=22885/; Internet. A May 22, 2006 Gallup Poll states that a decline has occurred in the number of Americans who view the Bible as the actual Word of God, from 38 percent in 1976, to 27 percent in 2006.

[19]D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers, 1996), 19.

[20]According to a Balad Air Base, Iraq, Religious Data Listing, a report indicating religious preferences of Air Force personnel assigned to the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, over 50 percent of those assigned indicated either no religious preference, other, or no faith at all.

Scripture in relation to the perceived needs of military members exists. Through the threshold of relevancy, intentional biblical preaching, rooted in the sufficiency, adequacy, and preeminence of Scripture, could provide the answer for those searching for stability in an instable environment.

This type of preaching is far more relevant than contemporary whims, psychology, opinion, and editorializing. In relation to the importance of biblical preaching, Puritan William Perkins wrote over four hundred years ago, "The Word of God alone is to be preached, in its perfection and inner consistency. Scripture is the exclusive subject of preaching, the only field in which the preacher is to labor."[21] Haddon Robinson refers to the importance of biblical and expositional preaching, centered on the biblical text alone, over and against preaching which focuses on fads, themes, and psychology, when he writes:

> More important, perhaps, is that some ministers in the pulpit feel robbed of an authoritative message. Much modern theology offers them little more than holy hunches, and they suspect that the sophisticates in the pew place more faith in science texts than in preaching texts. For some preachers, therefore, fads in communication become more alluring than the message . . . the startling and unusual may mask a vacuum.[22]

The Gospel of John and Second Timothy provide clear, doctrinal statements concerning the sufficiency, adequacy, and preeminence of Scripture in relation to the believer's life. God's Word is the only authority for faith and conduct, and is the sole, legitimate standard by which one evaluates all aspects of living. Believers are to rely on

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[21]William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 9.

[22]Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 18.

no other source.[23] God's Word provides hope and gives direction for change in thoughts, speech, and action, and is adequate to equip the believer. The permanent nature of Scripture provides a sense of stability to the believer, in contrast to the unstable and fallible nature of humanity's opinions and traditions.[24]

In John 17:17, Jesus states, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Sanctification, ἁγίασον, refers to the process of change, moving a believer closer and closer to being more Christlike.[25] Sanctification means to be made useful for religious service. Further, the idea carries with it the notion of purification of the person or object in order that they may be useful for service.[26] The method by which the believer experiences sanctification is through the agency of the Word.[27] In John 17:17, Jesus

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[23]Ps 19:7-11.

[24]Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1996), 321. "Upon the holy scriptures they [the Puritans] say, "we hold that they alone ought to be preached, and the whole of them preached, and nothing kept back; and that it is not lawful for men, or for angels, to add anything thereto, or take anything there from. And we affirm, that no antiquity, custom, interpretation, or opinion of men, no, nor statue or ordinance of any pope, council, parliament, or prince, may be set against the word of God."

[25]Millard Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 269. Erickson describes sanctification as "the continued transformation of moral and spiritual character so that the life of the believer actually comes to mirror the standing which he or she already has in God's sight."

[26]Walter Bauer, et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), electronic ed., *BibleWorks 7.*

[27]Robert Jamieson and A. R. Fausset, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research, 1997), electronic ed., Logos Research Systems, "medium or element of sanctification."

underscores the importance of the Word, λόγος, by declaring it truth, ἀλήθειά.[28] The

Word is truthful, dependable, and, in effect, a true picture of reality.[29]

Any biblical preaching must contribute to the process of sanctification in the

believer, as well as to be grounded in the reliability and certainty of the Bible.[30] Psalm

119:142 equates truth with the Law, thereby connecting truth with God's revelation. In

truth, believers can begin to confront themselves regarding their actions, thoughts, and

deeds. A dynamic process occurs in which the Holy Spirit takes the Word and convicts

the believer with the goal in mind of conforming them to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29).

Without truth, no sanctification can occur.[31]

In light of these passages, the preacher must focus on the authority and

reliability of the biblical text to address the relative concerns of the listener. According to

Andrew W. Blackwood, "The power to transform comes from God. He has chosen that

much of it should come through the preaching of Bible truth."[32] The Bible, then, must be

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[28]Frank Gaebelein, "The Pattern of God's Truth," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 111, no. 441 (January-March 1954). Gaebelein writes, "On the contrary, our Lord's habitual use of Scripture leaves no doubt of the fact that for Him the written Word was truth indeed."

[29]Alfred Jepsen, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 292-323. Jepsen places the equivalent Hebrew term אֱמֶת in the realm of faithfulness and security in an enduring sense that breeds confidence. Further, our word "amen" finds its substance in the concept of truth.

[30]David Mapes, "A New Kind of Christian," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 643, no. 161 (July-September 2004), 293. Mapes writes, "Jesus did not say, 'Your word is truthful' or 'Your word is true,' but rather 'Your word is *truth*'." This is significant since "being truthful" or "true" involves conformity to either an experience or some type of higher authority, whereas "the truth," on the other hand, constitutes an absolute standard. God's truth does not depend on one's experience of truth. Truth is absolute and universal.

[31]Roy Zuck, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 562, no. 141 (April-June 1984): 121. Zuck writes, "His work is always through and in association with the written Word of God, not beyond it or in addition to it. The Holy Spirit and the Word operate together."

[32]Andrew Blackwood, *Doctrinal Preaching for Today* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 204.

central in any attempt to address contemporary needs and situations. John Piper writes, "where the Bible is esteemed as the inspired, inerrant Word of God, preaching can flourish. But where the Bible is treated as a record of valuable religious insight, preaching dies."[33]

Further, Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." In this passage, Paul makes the assertion that Scripture has more function than mere words on a page. The Word takes on a purposeful meaning outside of intellectual assent. Key to this functionality is the word "profitable," ὠφέλιμος, which refers to an object's usefulness and beneficial advantage for the recipient. The divine nature of the Word is beneficial, because it, as Jerome Quinn writes, "comes from God, and it brings God into the believer's mind and personal life."[34] The apostle elaborates on the beneficial nature of Scripture by describing four applications of the Word.

First, the Scriptures are useful for doctrine, διδασκαλίαν, or teaching. Preaching's content must be ripe with scriptural truth in lieu of personal opinion, anecdote, and editorializing. Concerning this issue, Steven Lawson writes:

> In their [contemporary preacher's] zeal to lead popular and successful ministries many are becoming less concerned with pointing to the biblical text. Their use of the Bible is much like the singing of the national anthem before a ballgame--something merely heard at the beginning, but never referenced again, a necessary preliminary that almost becomes an awkward intrusion to the real event. In their attempt to be contemporary and relevant, many pastors talk *about* the Scriptures, but, sadly, they rarely speak *from* them. Instead they rush headlong to the next

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[33]John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2004), 44.

[34]Jerome Quinn, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, Critical Eerdmans Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 762.

personal illustration, humorous anecdote, sociological quote, or cultural reference, rarely to return to the biblical text. How can pastors expect dying souls to become spiritually healthy if they never give them the prescriptive remedy? How can pastors expect sinners to be converted (1 Pet. 1:23-25) and Christians to be sanctified (John 17:17) if they fail to expound God's Word?[35]

One finds a second purpose of the inspired Scriptures in correction, ἐπανόρθωσιν, which relates to the issue of conviction.[36] Reproofing refers to the fact that Scripture tells one when they have done wrong with the implication that adequate evidence of infraction through scriptural indictment exists.[37] Third, Scripture is profitable for correction of faults, outlining how one can become upright. From a conviction of sin flows a series of progressions from a state of enslavement to sin, before salvation, to glorification. Fourth, Scripture is profitable for instruction in righteousness. The intent of providing this instruction is the forming of proper habits of behavior. Righteousness is doing what God requires. In this verse, Paul argues that Scripture, being inspired, is useful, profitable, and beneficial to assist a person in living a biblical life of faith in an unbiblical world.

The purpose and goal of Scripture is seen then in 2 Timothy 3:17, which states, "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The word for thoroughly furnished, ἐξηρτισμένος, refers to both bringing something to an

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[35]Steven Lawson, "The Pattern of Biblical Preaching: An Expository Study of Ezra 7:10 and Nehemiah 8:1-18," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 629, no. 158 (January-March 2001): 452.

[36]I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary, ed. C. E. B. Cranfield (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 795. In this regard, Marshall writes, "getting a person to realize that they have done wrong."

[37]J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 435.

end,[38] as well as making something adequate.[39] Speaking to the purpose of sanctification, Knight states here that, "Since God created Christians for good works and calls on them to do good works,[40] he has given scripture to instruct them so that they may know in principle what God expects of them and thus be equipped to do that particular 'good deed' called for in each situation."[41] With this in mind, the writer will attempt to connect biblical truth to the needs of deployed members at Balad Air Base in order to assist in the process of sanctification through the proclamation of the Word of God.

GOALS AND ANTICIPATED FINDINGS

The writer hopes to accomplish several goals throughout the course of this project. The writer will attempt to produce a preaching plan, which will address several significant theological themes pertinent to a military member deployed to a combat zone. The preaching plan will include relevant Old and New Testament passages, as well as selected texts from the Lectionary during the Advent/Christmas season. The theological themes to be addressed include: hope, providence, salvation, endurance, comfort, a God-centered and exalting life, eternity, and the believer's purpose.

The writer will describe the military environment and constituency (Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, and Department of Defense civilian contractors). Further, the

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[38]Ibid., 637.

[39]Ibid., 679.

[40]Eph 2:10; Titus 3:1; and 2 Tim 2:21.

[41]George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 450.

writer will describe daily threats, such as mortar/rocket attacks and convoy duty.

Additionally, he will include a description of worship styles available to deployed

members.

Evaluation

The writer will summarize the exegesis and exposition of biblical texts,

specifically emphasizing military members' situations. Further, he will measure the

effectiveness of the preaching plan and sermons by the establishment of a "hearing

committee" comprised of each constituency in the writer's congregation. The members of

this committee will judge the writer on the following criteria: Was the text chosen

relevant to your experiences in Iraq? Why? or Why not?; What did the preacher do

particularly well?; What does the preacher need to do to improve his message?; and What

kinds of needs should future messages address?

The writer will make an evaluation to underscore adjustments that he should

make in future deployments. Further, the writer will discuss how his personal theology

has changed or been enhanced by the experience. In light of the lack of published

material on the subject of preaching in a combat environment, the writer will evaluate

possible contributions that one could make to the chaplaincy service to better equip future

chaplains who may find such material useful. He will accomplish this through

collaboration with the Air Force Chaplain Service Institute.

The writer's hope is that he will experience change through this deployment in

a number of areas. Theologically, the writer should develop an increasing appreciation

for God's sovereignty as he views God's plan unfolding in Iraq and in the lives around

him. As he experiences mortar and rocket attacks, the anticipation is that the writer will

grow in his understanding of God's protection and the Psalms, which speak of God caring for His saints. Visiting the Iraqi Theater Hospital and performing memorial services for fallen soldiers should challenge the writer's perspective on theodicy. Maintaining faith in God, while ministering to others at Balad Air Base, Iraq, will provide a challenge to the writer.

Supervision

The writer will depend upon the experience and strength of both his academic and field supervisors. Both men are career Army chaplains who have been mobilized and/or deployed and have dealt with many of the issues the writer will encounter. Through their guidance, the writer hopes to complete a project that contributes to the field of military chaplaincy and proves useful to future chaplains who will preach God's Word in a combat environment.

Due to the unique approval for this project, the first phase of supervision will be retroactive. Both supervisors will review the work that the writer completed in his first four-month deployment to Iraq. The writer will submit the balance of his work to both supervisors for evaluation. Additionally, the writer will provide a DVD of the Interfaith Community Thanksgiving Service, which the writer was tasked to organize and deliver the message. The supervisors will provide technical, theological, and practical suggestions for improvement of the writer's sermon construction and delivery.

Additionally, supervisory suggestions will provide a menu of options for presenting this thesis to peer journals and/or conferences. The writer will evaluate and outline possible journal articles, conference seminars, and presentations. Additionally, he

will explore the thesis for a published work. The writer's hope is to offer a meaningful

contribution to the chaplaincy services of all the branches of the United States military.