

Famous Words. Fighting Words. Faithful Words.

Throughout history, we have seen that words can inspire and turn seemingly ignominious defeat into famous victory. Words of warning before impending attack can inspire a tiny, outnumbered army to ultimate victory. Three examples will suffice: Henry V; Admiral Horatio Nelson; and Winston Churchill. It is to Henry V that we turn first.

The date is Friday, 25th Oct, 1415. England's small army of 6,000 men, almost entirely archers, with a few knights on foot and men at arms stood at bay, hungry, wracked by dysentery, and trapped with no way home across the English Channel. Facing them was a French army, rested and healthy, led by the cream of French nobility, over 30,000 strong, including 10,000 mounted knights and men at arms.

Offered the chance to surrender or face certain and swift death, Henry V refused, and rallied his troops with a famous speech.

*Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart; his passport shall be made,
And crowns for convoy put into his purse;
We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.
This day is call'd the feast of Crispian.
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is nam'd,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall live this day, and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian.'
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,
And say 'These wounds I had on Crispian's day.'
Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember, with advantages,
What feats he did that day.
And Crispin shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered-
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition;
And gentlemen in England now-a-bed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,*

*And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.*

A tiny army, facing a brutal assault by an overwhelming force, rallied by words of comfort and encouragement, and incredibly, overcame the enemy. 10,000 Frenchmen died, mostly knights and nobles, 1,500 nobles were captured and ransomed, and about 110 Englishmen died. A famous victory was won. Peace was the outcome.

We now turn to the words of Admiral Horatio Nelson. The date is now 21st October 1805. The French Revolution has left France awash with suffering and innocent blood. Madame la Guillotine has done her grisly work. The King and Queen have lost their heads. The Revolution has unleashed new forces on the world scene: militant atheism; extreme nationalism; and national conscription. The citizen armies of France have conquered their way across Europe, defeating army after army sent by the surrounding nations. They are led by one of the greatest generals of all time, Napoleon Bonaparte. Now, one nation alone stands between Napoleon and domination of Europe – England. With England gone, Napoleon can turn his eyes to the Middle East and India. World domination by an atheist power is not beyond the realms of possibility. This was not merely a clash of nations or civilizations. This was a clash between the world's leading Protestant and atheist nations.

But, to invade and conquer England, Napoleon must first destroy the Royal Navy. For two years, the English navy has blockaded the French navy in their ports of Toulon and Brest. In a feat of seamanship never seen before, the English ships of the line had tacked back and forth just outside the French ports, riding out the worst storms the Atlantic Ocean could throw at them, daring the French to come out to fight. Bottled up in their ports, the French lost their skills of seamanship, and their sea gunnery skills rapidly disappeared.

Eventually, after much maneuvering back and forth, and after chasing the French fleet from the Mediterranean, across the Atlantic to Haiti and back again, the two fleets are about to clash off the southern coast of Spain near to Cape Trafalgar.

The combined French and Spanish fleets with their 33 ships of the line struggled to maintain a line ahead formation. To their port, coming at them in two squadrons, were the 22 English ships of the line, led by Nelson on HMS Victory. Before the two navies collided, a signal was run up the mast of HMS Victory. The message was simple. "England expects every man to do his duty." A cheer rippled across the English fleet. Led by the Victory, they expected victory by night's end. Every man would indeed do his duty.

The Victory was the first ship to break the French line, and she engaged 3 French ships simultaneously. The fighting was fierce. Ships blasted broadsides at each other from point blank range. The carnage in the lower gun decks was horrendous. Grape-shot mixed with heated cannonballs wrought havoc on masts, rigging, and on sailors and marines.

At the height of the battle, a French sniper took aim at Admiral Nelson as he paced to and fro on the poop deck of the Victory. The musket-ball smashed into Nelson's shoulder, mortally wounding him. Nelson was carried down to the hold of the Victory. The sounds of battle were all around. In the dim light, he was given progress reports as his life slowly ebbed away. Finally, when the battle was won, he turned to Captain Hardy, his friend of many years and captain of the Victory, and uttered his last words, "Thank God, I have done my duty." He died shortly thereafter.

Every man indeed did "do his duty" on that bloody day. The outcome of the battle was the complete destruction of the French and Spanish navies. Napoleon would never again threaten England directly, and he was eventually defeated at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 and sent into exile in St Helena, a British island in the south Atlantic, where he died a few years later, some say of arsenic poisoning from the arsenic paint in his wallpaper. The outcome of the battle was English naval supremacy from 1805-1914, when WWI broke out. With this global naval supremacy, the way was clear for the spread of Protestant outreach around the world.

Moving forward in time, we come to the modern era....to 4th June 1940. The location is the House of Commons in the Palace of Westminster. The forces of Nazi Germany have just conquered France, and the British Expeditionary Force had been miraculously saved by the "Miracle of Dunkirk" when almost 340,000 men were evacuated off the beaches of Dunkirk. The men were soldiers from France, Britain, Poland, the Netherlands and other nations fighting the Nazis.

To ensure the evacuations could take place, French soldiers fought bitterly to the very end, holding the perimeter around Dunkirk, and preventing the Nazis from gaining direct access to the beaches. These French soldiers, particularly from the French 12th Motorized Division, fought and died in large numbers in what was a suicidal rear-guard action, knowing they themselves would never be evacuated, but in their sacrifice the bulk of the British army was saved.

And so we come to Churchill in the House of Commons. The nation was awaiting direction. The peoples of occupied Europe, suffering grievously under the Nazi jackboot, were anxiously listening. Would the British resist the expected Nazi onslaught, or would they negotiate a peace and let Herr Hitler take full control of Europe? There was nowhere to run. America had yet to enter the war. It was a bleak moment. One nation stood alone against the might of Nazi Germany and occupied Europe. And then Winston Churchill stood to speak. His peroration ranks as one of the finest speeches in the English language ever made.

Turning once again, and this time more generally, to the question of invasion, I would observe that there has never been a period in all these long centuries of which we boast when an absolute guarantee against invasion, still less against serious raids, could have been given to our people. In the days of Napoleon, of which I was speaking just now, the same wind which would have carried his transports across the Channel might have driven away the blockading fleet. There was always the chance, and it is that chance which has excited and befooled the imaginations of many Continental tyrants. Many are the tales that are told. We are assured that novel methods will be adopted, and when we see the originality of malice, the ingenuity of aggression, which our enemy displays, we may certainly prepare ourselves for every kind of novel stratagem and every kind of

brutal and treacherous manœuvre. I think that no idea is so outlandish that it should not be considered and viewed with a searching, but at the same time, I hope, with a steady eye. We must never forget the solid assurances of sea power and those which belong to air power if it can be locally exercised.

I have, myself, full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once more able to defend our island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone. At any rate, that is what we are going to try to do. That is the resolve of His Majesty's Government – every man of them. That is the will of Parliament and the nation. The British Empire and the French Republic, linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength.

Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.”

The impact of the speech was immediate. Faint hearts were encouraged. Resistance to the Nazis stiffened across Occupied Europe. The British Empire girded her loins for the Battle of Britain, when a handful of Spitfire and Hurricane fighter pilots fought off the onslaught of the German air-force (the Luftwaffe). At the end of the Battle of Britain in autumn 1940, reflecting on what those few fighter pilots had been able to achieve, Churchill spoke movingly of “The Few,” saying “*Never was so much owed by so many to so few.*”

Hitler was forced to abandon his ambitions to occupy Britain, so he turned his attention to Operation Barbarossa, Nazi assault on the Soviet Union, which ultimately led to Hitler's death and the end of the Third Reich.

It is perhaps the last words of Churchill's speech which stick out in my mind, saying that the fight against manifest evil would continue, “*until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.*” By this, Churchill meant the hope that America would awaken from her isolationist stance and enter WW2 on the side of the allies against the manifest evil of Nazi Germany. His words brought hope to the citizens of the “old world” – there was yet another world power which could enter the struggle against evil and ensure the defeat of that manifest evil.

And as we look forward into 2019, we might also apply Churchill's words to another controversy that is raging all around us. The Great Controversy. We are locked into a mortal struggle against the Prince of this World, the Prince of Darkness, and with his minions, representatives, ideologies and false-faiths on earth. As in 1940, we see the evidence of evil all around us. Persecution of God's saints on earth is on the rise. Brothers and sisters around the world face horrendous persecution, imprisonment, assault, economic sanctions, social rejection, economic sanctions, mob attacks, mockery, murder and the kidnapping of their daughters into forced marriages.

To paraphrase Churchill in such a time as this:

We shall go on to the end. We shall defend our faith and the blessed hope, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the airwaves, we shall fight on the internet, we shall fight in personal spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry, we shall fight in personal ministry and faithful witness, in Bible studies, from the pulpit and in deeds of sacrificial love, public and hidden. Yes, we shall fight among the unreached and in our own post-Christian

societies; we shall never surrender, our faith will never wax cold, and if, which I do not for a moment believe, our home churches were to be oppressed or closed down, then our worldwide Body, beyond the seas, armed with the Sword of the Spirit and guarded by the angels of God, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, on that blessed morning, the New World, with all its heavenly power and glorious might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old."

Or, as spoken by Jesus to His dispirited disciples before the greatest crisis of their lives, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also."* (John 14.1-3).

Wherever you are as you read these words, I want to encourage you today. One day it will be said of all those who dared to stand and to be counted, who sallied forth to the fight against seemingly overwhelming odds, that "merry few," that "band of brothers and sisters," that *"Never was so much owed by so many to so few."* So wherever you are today, fight the good fight. Finish the race. Keep the faith. And on that glorious day, when the *"New World, with all its heavenly power and glorious might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old,"* each of us will receive that crown of righteousness from our Lord.

Have a blessed Sabbath,

Conrad.