

A Soldier's Dying Wish

John Wilbur Chapman was one of the most prominent clergymen, church leaders and evangelists of the later 19th and early 20th centuries. More than 60 million people attended his evangelistic campaigns worldwide. He began preaching with the legendary Dwight L. Moody in 1893, as well as leading many evangelistic events of his own.

Chapman told the story of a soldier who was mortally wounded. His buddy, Jim, stayed by him through his long and lonely illness to the very end.

"Jim, I'm going to die," Charlie whispered to his friend. Knowing Jim had no family of his own, Charlie added, "But I want you to go back to my mother and take my place there."

"But Charlie, your mother doesn't know me," Jim reminded his dying comrade, "and she would not allow me to come into her home and live as a son."

"I will write her a letter, and you will take it to her," Charlie explained.

The letter told the mother of her son's ill fortunes, of his wounds, and of his suffering, and how Jim had stuck by him day and night through it all. The letter closed like this, "Mother, receive Jim for my sake."

Jim carefully tucked the letter away in his waistcoat. After the close of the war, he went to Charlie's hometown and sought out the mother's home. He knocked at the door and stood waiting, ragged and worn from the ravages of war, a very unsightly character.

As the lady opened the door, she looked at him and thought him to be just another beggar passing by. But Jim handed her the letter through the half-opened door.

She read it, recognizing her son's handwriting. When she read the last line, "Mother, receive Jim for my sake," the expression on her face changed, tears of deep emotion welled up inside, and she threw the door open wide, receiving Jim "for Charlie's sake."

According to Scripture, that sort of acceptance is the story of the cross. God accepts us as His own beloved children for Christ's sake. We may not understand why it had to be this way, but we look at the cross and see there an open door.

Out of this story, we remember. Wednesday was Veterans Day, and we remember those, like Charlie, who died that we may live in liberty. We remember those who died that we may have religious freedom. And we remember Christ who died that we may live forever.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16 NKJV).