

## FAITH VERSUS FATE

Thomas Jonathan (Stonewall) Jackson was a Confederate general during the Civil War, and one of the best-known commanders of the Confederacy after Gen. Robert E. Lee.

Military historians consider him to be one of the most gifted tactical commanders in U.S. history. In the 1970s movie *Patton*, which won a best-picture Oscar, World War II's U.S. Gen. George Patton Jr. is said to be "the greatest general since Stonewall Jackson" because of his military maneuvers in Palermo, Sicily.



A deacon in the Presbyterian Church, Jackson's spiritual life was his foundation for living and for battle. He once said, "My religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time for my death. I do not concern myself about that, but to be always ready, no matter when it may overtake me. That is the way all men should live, and then all would be equally brave." He disliked fighting on Sunday, although that did not stop him from doing so.

He was intensely focused on whatever was before him. Once, during a battle, he sat down to write out a message to send to a subordinate. A Union cannonball struck a large oak tree above where he sat, showering him with bark and wood chips. He brushed off his paper and continued writing, with full attention on his task.

Jackson might have echoed the words of Esther from the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in Persia: "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16).

When Esther spoke those words, she didn't speak fatalistically; she spoke faithfully. Esther was a Jewess who was the wife of the Persian king. When she learned of a plot by a Persian official to destroy all the Jews in Persia, she took her life in her hands by daring to approach the king to save her people from destruction. Persian law said that anyone approaching the king without permission – even his wife – would die unless the king granted a pardon.

Your faith in Christ may not be a life-or-death issue, but if it were, would your faith let you risk dying in order to do the will of God? Many Christians in the Middle East have been killed – some by beheading – because of the terroristic tactics of ISIS against followers of Christ in particular. These men and women paid the supreme sacrifice because of their faith.

When your faith is in God, the chips can fall where they may without taking you from the task at hand.

*Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?* (Esther 4:14 NKJV).