

Changing of the Guard

By Pastor Marvin R. Barham

The Sentinels

The Tomb of the Unknowns (also known as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier) is **guarded 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and in any weather** by Tomb Guard sentinels. Sentinels, **all volunteers**, are **considered to be the best of the elite** 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard), headquartered at Fort Myer, Va.

After members of the 3rd U.S. Infantry become ceremonially qualified, they are eligible to volunteer for duty as sentinels at the Tomb. If accepted, they are assigned to Company E of The Old Guard. Each soldier must be in **superb physical condition**, **possess an unblemished military record** and be between 5 feet, 10 inches and 6 feet, 4 inches tall, with a proportionate weight and build. An interview and a two-week trial to determine a volunteer's capability to train as a tomb guard is required.

During the trial phase, would-be sentinels **memorize seven pages of Arlington National Cemetery history**. This information **must be recited verbatim in order to earn a "walk."** A walk occurs between guard changes. A daytime walk is one-half hour in the summer and one hour in the winter. All night walks are one hour.

If a soldier passes the first training phase, "new-soldier" training begins. New sentinels **learn the history of Arlington National Cemetery and the grave locations of nearly 300 veterans**. They learn the guard-change ceremony and the manual of arms that takes place during the inspection portion of the Changing of the Guard. Sentinels learn to keep their uniforms and weapons in immaculate condition.

The sentinels **will be tested to earn the privilege** of wearing the silver Tomb Guard Identification Badge after several months of serving. First, they are tested on their manual of arms, uniform preparation and their walks. Then, the Badge Test is given. The test is 100 randomly selected questions of the 300 items memorized during training on the history of Arlington National Cemetery and the Tomb of the Unknowns. The would-be badge holder must get more than 95 percent correct to succeed. **Only 400 Tomb Guard Badges have been awarded since it was created in February 1958.**

The Tomb Guard Identification Badge is a temporary award until the badge-holding sentinel has honorably served at the Tomb of the Unknowns for nine months. At that time, the award can be made a permanent badge, which may then be worn for the rest of a military career. The silver badge is an upside-down, laurel-leaf wreath surrounding a depiction of the front face of the Tomb. Peace, Victory and Valor are portrayed as Greek figures. The words "Honor Guard" are shown below the Tomb on the badge.

There are three reliefs, each having one relief commander and about six sentinels. The three reliefs are divided by height so that those in each guard change ceremony look similar. The sentinels rotate walks every hour in the winter and at night, and every half-hour in the day during the summer.

The Tomb Guard Quarters is staffed using a rotating Kelly system. Each relief has the following schedule: first day on, one day off, second day on, one day off, third day on, four days off. Then, their schedule repeats.

The Ceremony

The guard is changed every hour on the hour Oct. 1 to March 31 in **an elaborate ritual**. From April 1 through September 30, there are more than double the opportunities to view the change because another change is added on the half hour and the cemetery closing time moves from 5 to 7 p.m.

An **impeccably uniformed relief commander appears on the plaza to announce the Changing of the Guard**. Soon the new sentinel leaves the Quarters and **unlocks the bolt of his or her M-14 rifle** to signal to the relief commander to start the ceremony. The relief commander walks out to the Tomb and salutes, then faces the spectators and asks them to stand and **stay silent** during the ceremony.

The relief commander conducts a detailed white-glove inspection of the weapon, checking each part of the rifle once. Then, the relief commander and the relieving sentinel meet the retiring sentinel at the center of the matted path in front of the Tomb. All three salute the Unknowns who have been symbolically given the Medal of Honor. Then the relief commander orders the relieved sentinel, "Pass on your orders." The current sentinel commands, "Post and orders, remain as directed." The newly posted sentinel replies, **"Orders**

acknowledged," and steps into position on the black mat. When the relief commander passes by, the new sentinel begins walking at a cadence of 90 steps per minute.

The Tomb Guard marches **21 steps** down the black mat behind the Tomb, turns, faces east for **21 seconds**, turns and faces north for **21 seconds**, then takes **21 steps** down the mat and repeats the process. After the turn, the sentinel executes a sharp "shoulder-arms" movement to place the weapon on the shoulder closest to the visitors to signify that the sentinel **stands between the Tomb and any possible threat**. Twenty-one was chosen because it symbolizes the highest military honor that can be bestowed -- the 21-gun salute.

Duty time when not "walking" is spent in the Tomb Guard Quarters below the Memorial Display Room of the Memorial Amphitheater where they **study Cemetery "knowledge," clean their weapons** and **help the rest** of their relief prepare for the Changing of the Guard. The guards also **train on their days off**.

The Guards of Honor at the Tomb of the Unknowns are **highly motivated** and are proud to honor all American **service members who are "Known But to God."** (*The Changing of the Guard; Arlington Cemetery Web site*)

I believe **we are spiritually in a season of the Changing of the Guard**. God is taking the church, the Kingdom of God, the gifts, the callings, the charge, and the anointing and raising up a people to **take it to another level**. I believe He is looking for and calling a people that will **raise the standard** of the charge beyond that of their fathers. He is calling us to take the vision to a **greater fulfillment**. To take what God gave them, showed them, and imparted unto them and **bring increase** to it and **take it to the nations**. To take the *prophetic* and bring a greater excellence to it, to take the *evangelistic* and set it on fire, to take the *apostolic* to the entire world, to take the *pastoral* and perfect it, to take the *teacher* and transfer it to the hearts of the people to hear and understand the Word of God. **To restore** the power and authority of the Word of God as the New Testament Church; to walk through this life in the **precision of His precepts and principles**; and to bring glory and honor to His name. He is looking for a people who are **NOT legalistic but disciplined**; who are **not religious but humble and full of compassion** yet their lives demonstrating the manifestation of the power of His Words of Life. He is looking for a people who act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before their God seeking to walk in the perfection of Christ without a reputation of self-pride. I see this pattern of God's call throughout Scripture.

Joseph is one example. His journey of test and trials toward the visions of a high calling for the Kingdom came through much brokenness and humility, disillusionment and discouragement that trained not his physical man but his soul and spirit man much discipline to honor God. **Genesis 40:3-4** *3And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. 4And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.* **Genesis 41:40-42** *40Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. 41And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. 42And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;*

For **Moses and Joshua** the standard was to know the law and live the law. Today we might consider it unreasonable for the Pastor or Prophet to expect us to gather our families to gather and sit and listen the duration of the 613 laws of God. The charge to Joshua was not just to lead the people, but for he himself to observe and live the law before the people. As he observed and lived the law, then the leadership would come. Many today want to assume a position in the church without first meeting the standard in their own lives. **Deut. 31:12-15** *11When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12Gather the people together, men and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: 13And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it. 14And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And*

Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. 15And the LORD appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle. **Joshua 1:1-3** *Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, 2Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. 3Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.*

Again, **King David** calls his son **Solomon** to give him charge over the Kingdom. The charge was not to be King and take authority. Instead, the charge is to observe the law of God and fear the Lord. **I Kings 2:1-4** *Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, 2I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; 3And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: 4That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.*

As I read this concerning the Changing of the Guard, the Standards, expectations, and lifestyle of the elite Sentinel, I gleamed a vision of what God's standard and expectation of His people resembles. Are we as Christians to adhere to any less a standard to honor the name of our risen Lord than that of a Sentinel who guards the tomb of an unknown hero

THE STANDARD OF GOD'S CHARGE:

1. **They serve willingly and voluntarily.** Knowing the standards and expectations, the tests and disciplines, they still choose to embrace the call. Even as volunteers, they are the best of the best.
2. **They have a record without blemish.** Their good is guarded and cannot be spoken evil of. They and their weapon, their gifts of power and authority remain pure and honorable. **1 Timothy 6:12-14** *12Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. 13I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; 14That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:*
3. **They earn the walk.** They earn the privilege to wear the title and bear the name reflective of the one they honor with their service. They know the history, the standard, and the vision of who they are, whom they serve and why.
4. **The standards are not too great** relative to the high call of which they answer. (**Matthew 24:14**) *Many are called, but few are chosen.* The walk is precise and remain highly motivated. There are really no off days or days of leisure where they can relax from the standard and compromise the call. Even when not officially on duty they are representative of the honor and are always seeking knowledge and understanding of their call and the one of whom they serve. They are instant in season, out of season, and during any season. They remain unshakable, solid, resolved, and un-distracted to the standard of their call. They uphold the standard and perform their duties 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. **Philippians 3:13-15** *13Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*
5. **They hear and acknowledge the call of the Supreme Commander.** They acknowledge their orders and

with absolute surrender to self comfort, serve others with honor. They stand in the gap and protect those whom they serve. Putting the wellbeing of others above themselves.

6. **They remain silent.** They do not boast or mummer or speak any evil. They listen for the voice of the commander and for anything that may sound like sounds of the enemy or any threat against those whom they serve. Their honor in service comes not from the praises of others but in the silence of their service to those whom they honor. **Philippians 2:6-8** *6Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7But **made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant,** and was made in the likeness of men: 8And being found in fashion as a man, **he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*** They seek not reputation of themselves and are “**Known But to God.**”

Will you accept the charge? Will you embrace the standard of righteousness in Christ and say, I want to be all He has charged me to be and serve Him with the honor He deserves. Will you say, Father, help me walk the walk which brings glory to your name. God is calling you to be more than you are. He is calling you to be a part of a higher calling. He is calling you to embrace His Kingdom. The church is not what she should be. The church has much to change. The Supreme Commander is calling for a change in His church. He is calling for a change in our lives. He is calling for us to take our rightful place in His Kingdom. He is calling us to an absolute surrender and discipline of His precepts and principles; to live as He lives. He is calling for a Changing of the Guard. He is calling us to guard our hearts, minds, souls and that of others; to guard your conscience and the honor of His name and His Word. Do you accept the charge?