



Known but to God

The Lord knows those who are his. (II Timothy 2:19).

They are called *the fallen*. They fell dead in defense of their homeland.

Row after row of headstones marks where their bodies rest. Many of them have their names engraved on those stones. Memorial plaques stand in garden-like sites in small towns and big cities to list the names of those who once lived there before they went off to war and never came back. The message is: “You are not forgotten.”

Some 58,000 names are etched into the Vietnam War Memorial. Hundreds of thousands of American names are listed among the fallen in her many wars.

But there are more. They carry the label, “Known but to God.”

The U.S. Army’s Warrior Ethos declares: “I will never leave a fallen comrade.” But sometimes there is no choice.

Battlefields are not neat and tidy. Weaponry damage can be massive. Areas can be abandoned. Sometimes, there is no way to identify what is left of the fallen warrior. Sometimes, the fallen are not found.

Sometimes they are simply listed as MIA—Missing in Action. But sometimes the label should read, POW—Prisoner of War.

We just don’t know. Their military leaders don’t know. Their families don’t know. Their nation does not know.

But their God does.

It was a Brit in the First World War who penned the famous words:

*“If I should die, think only this of me:
That there’s some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England.” (Rupert Brooke)*

We, Americans, can understand the sentiment. We applaud it. But Christian Americans know there is more comfort available than knowing some foreign country has been enriched by the life and death of our loved ones.

Surely, there must be more to life and death. And there is.

We might appreciate the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and value the memories of the fallen whose names remain unknown.

But that fades in comparison to the value found in the phrase, “Known but to God.”

After all, it makes little difference to the fallen if America knows their names. It is of eternal significance if the lord God knows them.

“Known but to God” can be viewed as a sad and lonely condition. The opposite is true!

To belong to America is a special blessing. To belong to God is an essential blessing. Only in his kingdom can true life and everlasting peace be found.

The banner over Golgotha, his final battlefield, carries the words, “Life Reigns.” His people have responded, “And he shall reign forever and ever.”

And so he shall. And so shall they. The issue is not in doubt. The Lord God assures us, *I have called you by name. You are mine.*

Known but to God?

That’s enough. That’s everything!

Written by Pastor Paul Ziemer
WELS National Civilian Chaplain and Liaison to the Military

