

Courage of Chamberlain

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The Courage of Chamberlain

Although this is not always the case, occasionally, the fate of an entire country, falls into the hands of a single dauntless soul. In 1863, Joshua Chamberlain, a young college professor gallantly led a squad of courageous men, from Maine, as they safeguarded a few acres of jagged, land on a hill in Pennsylvania. Many of these men gave their lives to preserve the rights of others. Their sacrifice has inspired many historians to believe that the United States is a country founded upon character, bravery, and dignity. If Chamberlain and his men had failed to protect that hill at Gettysburg, our nation would not be the same modern land of freedom it is today.

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain was born on September 8, 1828 in Brewer, Maine. He was the first-born son of five children. His parents, Joshua and Sarah Brastow Chamberlain raised the family on morals such as, thankfulness, trust and honor. These morals were emphasized through daily chores and farm work. All members of the family were included to ensure maximum productivity. As a result, Joshua Chamberlain developed into a hardworking man who was mannered as well as comical. Being an enthusiastic adventurer, he could sword fence, play violin, ride horses, sail with great skill and speak ten languages. In 1852, Chamberlain graduated from Bowdoin College, where he was a student of Harriet Beecher Stowe's husband, Calvin Stowe. (Kennedy vii)

Joshua Chamberlain was awarded the position of lieutenant colonel, due to his extensive education. He was a studious leader who did his share of military research. He obtained knowledge about many different war tactics and maneuvers through reading by lantern light in the night. Then he would strenuously drill the 20th Maine into shape. This strenuous training was a routine that would save our nation from uttermost obliteration. Chamberlains men hated every minute of training but did it nevertheless because they respected Joshua. The colonel earned this respect by remaining in close proximity with his men. Disregarding the fact that he was an officer he often refused entitlements and experienced the same hardships as his soldiers. (Kennedy 5)

Predating the battle of Gettysburg, Joshua Chamberlain fought in the battle of Fredericksburg in 1862. After the battle, he was left on the frozen field for the night. Chamberlain listened to the blood curdling screams of the wounded soldiers. The voices called for help, begged for water, and prayed for quick deaths. It was there where he realized the true cost of war. It was not the uniforms, rifles or footwear with the most cost. A large portion of the 20th Maine Regiment paid the price of life to forge the modern United States. (Kennedy 8)

The renowned courageous civil war legend, Joshua Chamberlain is remembered for his great courage at the battle of Gettysburg. He led the 20th Maine Infantry Regiment to the very end. Chamberlain was ordered to protect a hill named Little Round Top. If the confederate army seized that hill, they would gain the upper hand and ultimately destroy the union forces. As the 20th took their positions, cannons and snipers attacked them viciously. Joshua's men knew the penalties of losing Little Round Top to the confederates. He devised a strategy for his men to fire hastily while sidestepping through the terrain. Although this plan was effective, it costed many lives. He wrote, recalling the scene, "shouts of defiance, rally, and desperation; and underneath,

murmured entreaty and shifted moans...Everywhere men torn and broken, staggering, creeping, quivering on the earth, and dead faces with strangely fixed eyes staring stark into the sky.”

(Kennedy 15)

Chamberlain was a tough person. He was had horses shot from under him six times and was wounded six times. However, his most fatal injury occurred at Petersburg in 1864. He almost perished when a rifle bullet passed through both of his hips. Blood spilled through the voids. Chamberlain's injury was so critical that he was promoted to brigadier general on the battleground. War heroes are only promoted in this way when they are about to die.

Nevertheless, because of a miraculous successful surgery he survived. (Ashby 12)

After the war, Joshua Chamberlain lived a virtuous life. He was finally, being rewarded for his past courage under pressure. In 1893, He received the congressional Medal for Honor, for his was efforts at Gettysburg. Subsequently, he served as the president of Bowdoin College. He also gained the title governor of Maine for one term. Chamberlain died at age 86 on February 24th 1914. Unfortunately, he did not die of natural causes. The wound he had received many years ago was the cause for his death. (Ashby 12)

In conclusion, the young college professor Joshua Chamberlain courageously decided the fate of our nation. He did not let the confederates take the Pennsylvania hilltop. He gallantly led the 20th Maine. Tactics taught during training allowed this victory. Although many lives were lost at Gettysburg, the mission was accomplished. Because of this courage and will to succeed, Chamberlain earned a retirement of blissful twilight years. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain will long be remembered as a Civil War legend, due to his calmness under pressure and focus on achieving his goals.

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