One of the most famous speeches in *Henry V* is the King’s speech to rally his troops before their battle with the French army. Westmoreland wishes there were more men from England with them to fight. King Henry responds: "If we are marked to die, we are enough / To do our country loss; and if to live, / The fewer men, the greater share of honor."

Such words would have been familiar to Shakespeare’s audience. About 10 years before this play was written, King Philip of Spain sent his huge Armada to defeat the English Royal Navy and invade the country. Queen Elizabeth travelled to where her troops were assembled at Tilbury to speak to them in person: "I am come amongst the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood..."

Henry personifies honor, patriotism, and courage in his St. Crispin’s Day speech, where he rallies his outnumbered troops as they prepare for battle. He identifies honor as the highest reward, and promises high honors to those who fight with him. He assures them that they will be remembered through time for their bravery and celebrated for their heroism. He addresses them as his brothers: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers."

The words of this speech have continued to be used to inspire heroism and patriotism. The chorus of the song "Hail Columbia" was written for the inauguration of President George Washington following the American Revolutionary War: Firm, united let us be, / Rallying round our liberty, / As a band of brothers joined, / Peace and safety we shall find. Later, the phrase "band of brothers" was used in a popular Civil War song, "The Bonnie Blue Flag," and even during the Napoleonic Wars, British hero Admiral Lord Nelson is quoted as saying, "I had the happiness to command a band of brothers."

The speech itself was delivered by actor Laurence Olivier during World World War II as part of a radio program. It was so inspiring that Prime Minister Winston Churchill told Olivier to produce a movie of *Henry V* to raise morale in England in the late years of the war.

More recently, the phrase is used as the title of the book and HBO series *Band of Brothers*. The series tells the story of Easy Company of the US Army 101st Airborne division and their mission in the Second World War from Operation Overlord to the war’s end. A passage from the speech is quoted on the first page of the book, and the speech is also quoted by Carwood Lipton in the final episode.

This speech marks a turning point in the play. Henry has completed the transformation from Prince Hal into a true king. The troops prepare to embark on a battle they seem destined to lose. That their king is willing to fight (and possibly die) alongside them spurs the troops to win the day. The speech and the image of Henry delivering it have become a lasting symbol of leadership and resolve.

**Speech by Henry V (William Shakespeare)**

What's he that wishes so?
My cousin Westmoreland? No, my fair cousin:
If we are mark'd to die, we are enow
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires:
But if it be a sin to covet honour,
I am the most offending soul alive.
No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England:
God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour
As one man more, methinks, would share from me
For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!
Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart; his passport shall be made
And crowns for convoy put into his purse:
We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.
This day is called the feast of Crispian:
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall live this day, and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.
And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'
Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day: then shall our names.
Familiar in his mouth as household words
Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.
This story shall the good man teach his son;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remember'd;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition:
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.