

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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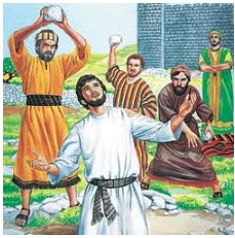
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January 17, 2021

“Martyrs”

by Jarrod Jacobs



I once read about a young European man named Cornelius. In 1552, he was arrested for his faith. He suffered for three years at the hands of priests, monks, and high-ranking clergy who tortured him and tried to get him to deny his faith. Thankfully, he would not be swayed. The tormentors then changed tactics and bribed him with this world’s goods if he would deny his faith. This tactic also failed. Finally, they burned him at the stake!

Stories like Cornelius’ are multiplied when we read through secular history. In my office, I have a picture of preachers of the gospel from the 1800s. One of the preachers, W.M. King, has a caption that reads, “A Martyr For Christ.” He takes his place with many who died for preaching the truth! What can we learn from the example of martyrs?

A Martyr Is “Faithful Unto Death” (Rev. 2:10).

Being “faithful unto death” means being faithful to the very taking of your life! This is what martyrs do! When faced with the possibility of losing their lives or losing favor with God, people like Antipas, Cornelius, and bro. King chose to lose their lives!

Another martyr for Christ was Polycarp. Polycarp was contemporary with the apostle John. When threatened with being burned at the stake for his refusal to worship Caesar, he responded: “For eighty-six years I’ve served Jesus, and he has never wronged me in any way. How, then, can I possibly curse my very King and Savior?”

All Christians need to be faithful to God to the very taking of our lives. Martyrs for the cause of Christ show us the full extent of what it means to be faithful to the Lord.

A Martyr’s Example Abides.

In contrast with the evil ones that are often forgotten after their deaths (Ecc. 8:10), the example of those martyred for Christ remains. Paul taught that faithful people’s good works could not be hidden (1 Tim. 5:25). In addition to the martyrs we have mentioned, don’t forget Stephen (Acts 7). He left an example for us and left a great impression on Saul of Tarsus (Acts 7:58)! Stephen, when he knew he was going to be killed, did not apologize, change his teaching, nor in any way compromise so he could live another day. His good example abides and teaches us bravery in the face of man’s hatred. Many other examples could be added to this list.

A Martyr Has Vision.

In addition to the martyrs we have mentioned, Hebrews 11:35-38 lists things that happened to the Lord’s faithful: “*Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy)*” One’s life ending in a cruel death is not what people desire. Yet, these folks died knowing that they would “*obtain a better resurrection*”! They understood that our purpose in life is not on earth, but with God!

Hebrews 11:35-38 is but one passage where we see the vision of the faithful. Their principles would not allow them to forsake the Lord. Therefore, they accepted the consequences of being the friend of God and an enemy of the world (Jas. 4:4; Jn. 15:18-20). Hebrews 11:13-16 applies as well. “*They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*” The man who has his eyes upon the “here and now” will not have

the vision necessary to see the “city” that is to come! Let us thank God for those who were faithful (in Bible days and “modern days”) to the very taking of their lives and died in His service.

My question is: What will we give up for the Lord? In what way do we suffer for the cause of Christ (II Tim. 3:12)? Friends, are we aware that many suffer for the Lord like what we read in Scripture? Many in foreign lands face persecution and death simply because they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The religious liberty we enjoy is a rare gift. Let us not take for granted the freedom we enjoy! Martyrs abound in this world!

I noticed as I read about Cornelius that when the tormentors saw that their torture was not working, they offered him the goods of this world instead of torture. If the beatings would not work, perhaps bribing him to abandon his faith would! It didn't work for Cornelius, but what about us? We know that in the United States, we do not face the kind of persecution others in the world do.

Yet, have we ever considered that perhaps Satan is working on us in another manner? Rather than using “strong-arm tactics,” he is luring us away from God with the goods of this world. Is this not obvious?

It reminds me of the parable of the sower when Jesus said some folks had not produced spiritual fruit but had been “choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life” (Lk. 8:14).

If this does not sound like what is happening in our country, I don't know what does! We might not face a firing squad for being a Christian, but we face a “death by 1000 cuts” as Satan slowly chips away at our faith with the pleasures of the world. Sadly, many Christians are falling for his lies! Many prefer to be comfortable rather than right with God. We think that worldly success is reflective of spiritual success, and we have given up our faith as a result!

Jesus' words to His apostles are sober reminders. He said, “*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also*” (Jn. 15:18-20). In light of this, we need to ask what the world sees in us. Are we living a life that pleases the Lord? Are we living in a way that the world sees Christ in us (Acts 4:13)? Are we allowing our light to shine before men (Matt. 5:14-16)? Or, are we living for the pleasures of this world? Are we allowing Satan to “snuff” out our lights through his temptations?

I suppose one of the most impressive things about the martyrs in the Bible and in modern times is that they had the bravery to say they will not change their minds or their teaching regardless of what someone might do to them. This takes courage, and this takes faith! If we do not believe in the Lord God, or in the life to come, then why suffer? No one wishes to die for a fairy tale, but many have willingly died for the truth!

Conclusion

Let us examine ourselves (II Cor. 13:5). Are we faithful to the Lord (Rev. 2:10)? Does I Corinthians 15:58 describe us? Are we standing strong and enduring (Matt. 10:22; Eph. 6:10)? Are we better than the martyrs? Are we enduring more than they? Are our enemies stronger than theirs? Being a Christian is not for the faint-hearted! The Holy Spirit said, “*Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*” May the words of Hebrews 10:38-39 ring in our ears and settle in our hearts so that we live it in our lives!

How strong is *our* faith (Lk. 18:8)? Do we believe in Christ, and do we believe what the Bible says about Him? If so, are we willing to stand for Him? James teaches us that “*faith without works is dead*” (Jas. 2:26). Do we have a living faith or a dead faith? When I think of martyrs for Christ, I find folks who died on this earth while possessing a living faith (Rev. 2:13)! Are we ready to show our faithfulness to this degree? Or, do we have a dead faith while living on the earth? Make that firm determination to live faithfully for the Lord, to the very taking of our lives (Rev. 2:10)! Let us not back down, slow down, or quit – ever! Losing our lives and gaining eternity with the Lord is wort



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“Lessons From David, Uzzah & The Ark of God”

Lesson Text: **1 Chronicles 15:13-15.**

I. The Main Characters:

- (1) **David**— The man God chose to replace King Saul as ruler over God’s people.
This all happens because the capital of Israel is moving from Hebron to Jerusalem.
- (2) **Uzzah**— Son of Abinadab and brother to Ahio.
- (3) **The Ark of God**— **Exodus 25:10-22.**
- (4) **David’s New Cart**— **1 Chronicles 13:5-7.**
Something NOT Spoken in Scripture— An Innovation.

II. 1 Chronicles 13:1-14 (2 Samuel 6:1-11 Parallel Account).

III. 1 Chronicles 15:1-14. David Sees Where They Went Wrong.

IV. Lessons For Us Today— Romans 15:4.

1. Wrong Is Still Wrong, Even If Done With Good Intentions.

- A. Uzzah had only good in mind in steadying the ark.
- B. But still, even the best intentions are in error when we do something God does Not approve of!
- C. Some today live by the principles of **Situation Ethics, Pragmatism,** and **“The End Justifies The Means”** attitude in their actions.
- D. Good Intentions are NOT ENOUGH! He still died for *“his error.”* (NKJB)

2. Wrong Is Still Wrong, Even If Done In Ignorance.

- A. Uzzah May Have Acted Before He Thought or Out Of Ignorance.
- B. But Can Ignorance Of God’s Law Be Justification For Any Action?
- C. Saul of Tarsus Acted Out Of Ignorance— **1 Timothy 1:13.**

3. Wrong Is Still Wrong, Even If God Has Not Said, “Don’t...”

- A. We Must Learn The Lesson Of Respecting God’s Silence.
- B. God had already spoken in **Exodus 25:14; Numbers 4:5-6.**
- C. Very Similar To **Leviticus 10:1-3.**

4. Wrong Is Still Wrong, Even If We Love God.

- A. Uzzah Loved God and Wanted To Protect The Ark From Harm.
- B. Many People Claim To Love God, Yet Show Him No Reverence.
- C. The Way We Love God Is By Keeping His Word— **John 14:15.**

5. Wrong Is Still Wrong, Even If It Seems “Trivial” To Us.

- A. Some might view how God wanted the Ark moved as trivial—But God Did NOT!
- B. **Proverbs 14:12.**

6. Wrong Is Still Wrong, Even When Following Religious Leaders.

- A. David Is The One Who Was In Charge Of Bringing The Ark Back.
- B. If They Were Following David’s Direction, David was the one who failed to see to it that they did this right— *“According to the Ordinance.”* (**1 Chronicles 15:13**).

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Debbie Keplinger, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Clois Wright, Dan & Linda Hunt, Mollie Harris, David Taylor, Randy Beaty, Sam Johnson, Sherry Doles, Roy Robinson, Joe Fitch and family (quarantined for Covid). Danny Cottrell (Dan's Dad)

Those Who Serve:

Announcements:	Fred Johnson
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading:	Jerry Kennemur <i>I Chronicles 15:13-15</i>
Song Leader:	Lee Busby
Lord's Supper:	Sam Johnson
Preaching:	Brian Meade
Sermon:	<i>"Lessons From David, Uzzah, & the Ark of God"</i>
Closing Prayer:	Tim Harris Sr.