

Tuesday's Touch ...#16

...from Pastor Ed ...May 12, 2009

They Loved Not Their Lives Unto Death

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Rev. 12:11

And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Acts 4:33

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? Hebrews 2:3

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. 2 Corinth.10:4

***F**or what would you be willing to die? There have always been religious or political zealots who have been willing to die for what they believe, or to gain a better 'hereafter'. We are all too familiar with the radical religious suicide bombers in the world today. But this begs the question: why should anyone think any differently about the faith of Christian martyrs? They believe something strongly enough that they are willing to die for their faith.*

The first fact to consider is the fundamental difference inherent in the martyrdom of the original Apostles of Christ. While perhaps anyone could come to believe something strongly enough to die for 'the cause', there is an important distinction regarding the original disciples who were tortured to death for the faith. That to which the Apostles testified was not just what they believed about Christ, but their eye-witness accounts of His miracles, death, and resurrection, and the beginning of the Christian Church. In other words, they actually knew whether or not they were telling the truth. We would be hard pressed to find so many who would knowingly die to defend what they knew to be a lie. If the Apostles knew they were lying there is no logical reason they should have endured lives of terrible hardship with no personal gain, followed, for the most part, by horrible deaths.

Furthermore, the martyrs of Christ ever since are overwhelmingly 'sheep led to the slaughter'. They do not die because they are waging a holy war with sword, gun, or explosives, but simply for the testimony of Christ and being unwilling to renounce the truth that is in Him. It is entirely disingenuous to emphasize a few misguided radical Christians or churches in history as typical examples of why Christians become martyrs. The overwhelming testimony of history is that the majority of martyrs for Christ have done nothing more than preach the gospel of grace in love, and have died passively at the hands of their enemies.

Examine closely those who die for other faiths. Do they die holding on to their own eye-witness accounts of historical events, like the original Apostles of Christ, with no personal benefit? Are the sole weapons of their warfare the preaching of truth, mighty prayer, and the demonstration of love, even for their enemies? Do they, like Christ, die praying for their executioners?

May we who know Christ in these days of growing anti-Christian sentiment find grace to be faithful, even unto death, putting on the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10-20). And let the Church of Christ never resort to the weapons of the flesh to advance the cause of Christ.

*Not with swords loud clashing,
Nor roll of stirring drums-
With deeds of love and mercy
Thy heavenly kingdom comes.*

E. W. Shurtleff, 'Lead on O King Eternal'

Lord, Strong & Mighty in Battle,

Grant us the courage of faith, the faithfulness of your Apostles, and the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

Amen

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