

apr 18

will you suffer a stripe for Christ

"for i reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." rom 8:18

i am reminded of the time peter and the apostles (the others remain unspecified) were brought before the high priest and were ordered to be beaten before release. "so they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." acts 5:41 this after they had previously been thrown into prison and released supernaturally by an angel of the Lord. you'd think that would be enough to convince the hard-headed council, but apparently not. satan is determined in his effort to halt the good news of the gospel.

likewise i am reminded of the story i told recently of richard wurmbrand. "it was strictly forbidden to preach to other prisoners. it was understood that whoever was caught doing this received a severe beating. a number of us decided to pay the price for the privilege of preaching, so we accepted their [the communists'] terms. it was a deal; we preached and they beat us. we were happy preaching. they were happy beating us, so everyone was happy."

even right now as you read these words, many saints around the world are being allotted this grace. the grace to share in His sufferings. "that i may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship

of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." phil 3:10 the word says that he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

while one would understandably be reluctant to suffer at the hands of a defeated foe, be it the one thing capable of driving away any sin separating me from my Lord, my voice would mimic the cry of the patriot nathan hale. his cry was "i only regret that i have but one life to lose for my country." my regret would be that i have but one life to give for my Lord.

"yet indeed i also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom i have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that i may gain Christ." phil 3:8 i might also add this strong admonishment from the lips of our Lord: "for whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it." mark 8:35

i never was a big soap opera fan. a soap opera is what they call those daily shows that seemingly have a plot stretching out for eternity. i think i had an aunt that used to watch them religiously. i honestly don't know if they still have them or not. i'm too concerned with real life tragedies to dwell on make believe ones.

anyway, there was one called "days of our life." the trademark voiceover promo for the show was: "like sands through the hourglass, so are the days of our lives." in other words, they were quickly passing. those words, though casually spoken for a silly make-believe plot, remain some of the truest that could ever be

spoken about any life. yes, "for what is your life? it is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." james 4:14

now we all find ourselves standing here - the last generation before His coming. some might call it the terminal generation as God has promised, "I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, a man more than the golden wedge of ophir." isa 13:12

i can almost hear all the saints from ages past - gathered in that great cloud of witnesses - urging us to carry bravely and swiftly that baton they have passed us to finish that last leg of the race. all their efforts to get us where we are was to gain an advantage we would need to excel in our efforts to glorify and magnify the deeds of our Lord and Savior.

"but the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers." 1 pet 4:7 now is the time if you're going to serve Him. now is the time to make sure the talent allotted to you is invested for His glory. we will never be that great evangelist, drawing multitudes to Christ. we will never have millions to fund and feed the masses. we will never have the elegance of a psalmist to pen words worthy of His praise. but to save one soul for eternity is worth a whole life.

so what about that one simple soul that God brings across our path? what's it's worth to you? what about that irritating relative or neighbor? is there a reason they are there - to hinder or to help? perhaps to receive a witness or a meal; perhaps to explain hope

can be grasped in one's darkest fears, light can be found in darkness. i do not think any of our life have such a happening by chance. there is a purpose and a plan if we will only look to Jesus. "we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." rom 8:28

but remember, that which must be done, must be done quickly. like sands through the hourglass, so are the days of our lives. "he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain that which he cannot lose." - jim elliot quote.