

The Old Paths

Volume 20, Issue 12

May 19, 2013

“A Martyr For Christ”

Jarrod Jacobs

On my wall I have a picture of several preachers of the gospel from the late 1800's and early 1900's. Some of these men I have heard of, and many I haven't. However, one man stands out in that picture. This is a man named W. M. King. He stands out because above his picture there is a caption which reads, “A Martyr For Christ”. I don't know anything else about that man, but that inscription alone speaks volumes to me!

This simple, yet deeply moving epitaph for brother King reminds me of the statement made about Antipas in Revelation 2:13: *“I know your works, and I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas was my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”* Just as in the case of the picture on my wall, I know little about Antipas, but what God chose to reveal in Scripture speaks volumes! Antipas and bro. King are not the only ones who have died because they were faithful to God. What can we learn from these (and other) martyrs?

A Martyr Is Living Revelation 2:10.

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer, Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that ye

may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Being “*faithful unto death*” (KJV, ESV) literally means be 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 chose to lose their lives!

In addition to Antipas and brother King, another example of a martyr for Christ is a man named Polycarp. Polycarp was contemporary with the apostle John, and suffered death due to his faith. When threatened with death for his refusal to renounce God and worship Caesar, he responded thusly before being burned at the stake: *“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?”*¹

Even today, Christians need to be faithful to God to the very taking of our lives. Martyrs for the cause of Christ show us just what it means to be faithful.

A Martyr's Example Abides.

Solomon wrote, *“Then I saw the wicked buried. They used to go in and out of the holy place and they were forgotten in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity”* (Ecc. 8:10). In contrast with the evil ones that are often forgotten after their death, years after the death of various martyrs for Christ, we are still talking about them! Their example remains. The apostle Paul taught

that the good works of the faithful cannot be hid (I Tim. 5:25). In addition to the martyrs we have mentioned, don't forget Stephen, the very first martyr for Christ (Acts 7). Certainly, he left an example that not only teaches us, but it had to have also made an impression on a certain 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 as to “live another day.” His good example abides and teaches us bravery in the face of man's hatred.

A Martyr Has Vision.

In addition to martyrs specifically named in the Bible, remember that Hebrews 11:35-38 lists the things which happened to the Lord's faithful in years gone by. *“Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated — of whom the world was not worthy —”* One's life ending in a cruel death is not what people desire. Yet, these folks died such deaths, knowing that they would “rise again to a better life”! They understood that true meaning and purpose in life is not to be found here on earth, but with God!

Hebrews 11:35-38 is but one section of Scripture 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 (cf. Jas. 4:4; Jn. 15:18-20). Hebrews 11:13-15 certainly applies to them, because they, like Abraham, Noah, and others, *“desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed*

to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city." The man who has his eyes only upon the "here and now" will not have the vision necessary to see the "city" that is yet to come! Let us thank God for those who were faithful to the very taking of their lives, and died in service to God.

Conclusion

Seeing the realities of what folks in the past have endured for God and for the cause of Christ, let us examine ourselves (II Cor. 13:5). Are we faithful to the Lord (Rev. 2:10)? Does I Corinthians 15:58 describe us? If not, why not? Are we standing strong and enduring (Matt. 10:22; Eph. 6:10)? If not, why not? Are we better than those martyrs? Are we enduring more than they did? Are our enemies stronger than theirs? As the apostle said, we have not yet "resisted to the point of shedding your blood" (Heb. 12:4), and we pray it will not be so in this land. However, there are many this day who are enduring such trials and afflictions. Let us pray for them, and then prepare, ourselves.

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! The Holy Spirit said, "Now the just shall live by faith: and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls."

Endnotes:

1. Bercot, David, Will The Real Heretics Please Stand Up, p. 2

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Faith And Works In Hebrews 11

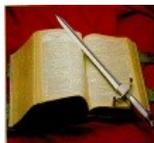
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Some people mistakenly believe that having "faith" excludes "works" from their salvation. The Bible does not teach this. The Bible joins "faith" and "works" together (Rom. 10:16; Jas. 2:17-26). Please read the chart below. Hopefully, this chart will help us see how faith and works were connected in the lives of those faithful people recorded in Hebrews 11. Let us read it and understand how no one can separate faith and works from God's plan.

Faith

Works

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Abel (v. 4) | Offered a more excellent sacrifice |
| Enoch (v. 5) | Pleased God |
| Noah (v. 7) | Moved with fear ... Prepared An Ark |
| Abraham (v. 8-9) | Obedied ... Sojourned |
| Sarah (v. 11) | Conceived ... delivered a child |
| Abraham (v. 17) | Offered up Isaac |
| Isaac (v. 20) | Blessed Jacob and Esau |
| Jacob (v. 21) | Blessed his sons ... worshiped |
| Joseph (v. 22) | Gave commandment concerning his bones |
| Moses' parents (v. 23) | Hid Moses as an infant ... were not afraid of the king's commandment |
| Moses (v. 24-28) | Refused Egypt ... Choosing to suffer ... Forsook Egypt ... Kept the Passover |
| Israelite nation (v. 29-30) | Crossed the Red Sea ... Compassed the walls of Jericho |
| Rahab (v. 31) | Received the spies |
| Numerous faith heroes (v. 32-38) | Subdued kingdoms ... obtained promises ... escaped the edge of the sword ... many died for their faith! |



I want the truth, give me book, chapter, and verse!

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