

A Good Martyr

Persecution rages

- India . . . Pakistan . . . Nigeria . . .
- Some lost homes, jobs, and life itself for five words . . . **I believe in Jesus Christ**

U.S. is known around the world
for religious freedom.
Could it happen here?

I. Definition: Martyr

Martyr = witness

- Because early Christians frequently died for their faith, *martyr* came to mean “one who witnesses at cost of life” – BDAG

Martyr is used of . . .

1. One who testifies in legal matters, witness:
Ac.6:13ff; 7:58 [false witnesses against Stephen]
2. One who came from heaven testifies
about what He saw and heard, Jn.3:32
3. Christians, 1 Th.2:10, *You are witnesses.*
Hb.12:1, *great cloud of witnesses.*
4. One who witnesses at cost of his life,
Ac.22:20

Accidental death – not a martyr

I. Definition: Martyr

II. Good Martyrs

- Prophets / saints of OT. 1 K.18:4
- John, Mk.6:27
- Apostles / prophets, Lk.11:49-50
 - Peter, Jn.21:18-19. (Mk.14). 2 Pt.1:12-15
 - James, Ac.12:1-3
 - Paul, Ac.21:13. Ph.1:20; 2:17-18
- Christians suffered under Saul, Ac.22:4

Christians paid ultimate price

- Rv.2¹⁰ Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life
- Rv.2¹³ ...you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells
 - Do not fear
 - Be faithful to death

Christians paid ultimate price

- Rv.12¹¹ loved not their life even to death
- Rv.20⁴ ...I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God...
 - Old method of execution (Mk.6:27)
 - Now they reign with Christ

I. Definition: Martyr

II. Good Martyrs

III. Some People do not
Make Good Martyrs

Fearful

- Mt.10²⁸ do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell
- Mt.10²³ when they persecute you in this city, flee to another –
 - Instinct is self-preservation
 - Instruction is ‘do not fear man’
- Lk12⁴ do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do

Lk.4:29-30

Worldly

- Mt.10³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it

One who abandons Christ to escape death may extend his mortal life a few years, but by that very act lose true life. One who loses his life for Christ's sake finds the highest life

Worldly

- Mt.16:24-25, two crosses, two lives

24: Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny** himself, and take up his cross, and **follow Me**

- Cross: He told them about His cross, then their own

25: For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it

- Play on words: life may be temporal or eternal

Liars

- Acts 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32, etc. — ‘martyr’ —
cf. 6:11, 13
 1. One who testifies, a *witness*
 2. One who testifies at cost of his life, a *martyr*
- Lord’s apostles would die for Him rather than recant ... *BUT* they would not die for a lie

Proud

- 1 Corinthians 13³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing
- Some courted martyrdom for glory – “martyr complex” [Ignatius]
- Without love and faith, martyrdom is worthless

I. Definition: Martyr

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III. Some do not make Good Martyrs

IV. Lessons

1. Others have died for Christ. Will we?

- Hb.11:37, They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented —38 of whom the world was not worthy
- Nero
- *Am I A Soldier of the Cross?* (513)
- *Faith of our Fathers* (531)

2. Lord set ultimate example

- Hb.12:2 ...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God

3. Some Hebrews are losing the battle even without martyrdom

- Hb.12:4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin
- Resist sin...or lose everything

4. If we give the ultimate sacrifice, it is not meritorious

- 1 Jn.3:16, By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren

5. A martyr's spirit puts the mind in a spiritual perspective

- 2 Tim.4:6-8
- Deathbed concentrates the mind on important things

6. Even if we are not called on to die, we still sacrifice our lives by obeying the gospel (present tense)

- Family life

- AD 260-303, churches experienced a period of peace and prosperity
- Built large, splendid houses of worship in chief cities, and provided collections of sacred books and vessels of gold and silver for Lord's Supper
- But in the same proportion discipline relaxed, quarrels, intrigues, and factions increased, and worldliness poured in like a flood (Sch.II,63)