

5. WHAT WOULD YOU DIE FOR?

*In boxing there's a saying that goes:
The guy that aint afriad of dying is
gonna win.*



#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

WHAT WOULD YOU DIE FOR?

2 Timothy 2:3: *“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”*

The world is currently facing disease and death all-around. COVID-19 has brought many countries to their knees. Individuals and households are facing the fear of the unknown. The fear of illness and possibly death. With death staring us in the face, the question comes to mind: “What would I be willing to die for?” The question I want to pose to you today, is: **“What are you willing to die for?”** “What would **you** give your life for?”

John 15:13 says: *“Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”* What would you die for? Family? A friend? Perhaps to stand up for your moral values? Would you die for God? If you are like me, somewhere in life, you might have made the declaration that you would give your life for God. If there ever comes a time when God would call upon you to die for His cause, would you gladly stand up and volunteer to die for Him? If your answer is yes, what does ‘to die for Christ’ mean? What are the risks involved in making such a declaration?

When soldiers sign up for war they know the risks involved and they take on these risks happily knowing that they might die. They feel it an honour to suffer or even die for their country. We are soldiers in God's army. Soldiers who are called upon to lay down our lives for the sake of the gospel. In John 13:38 (ESV), Jesus asks Peter while in the Garden of Gethsemane: *“Will you lay down your life for Me?”* Today, Jesus asks us the same question: *“Will you lay down your life for Me?”*

**SOLDIERS KNOW THE RISKS THEY
SIGN UP FOR, DO YOU KNOW THE
RISKS INVOLVED IN
VOLUNTEERING FOR
CHRISTIANITY?**

There are different ways to lay down our life. Some of us will be called upon to die. Others will be called upon to live, but to die to self. This is often much harder than what we can imagine.

I heard a joke saying that often spouses will make declarations that if ever the time comes where they have to lay down their lives for each other, they would do it. But then, when asked to do the dishes or take out the trash, the spouse grumbles and moans and does not want to do it. We are very quick to make a declaration that we will die for someone or something. To die for someone may be hard, but what is much harder, is to live for someone. To die for Christ might be something easy to do, but to live for Him, might be a harder sacrifice. A sacrifice which calls us to put aside our self and our own needs and wants.

Both of these, either to live or to die, is a sacrifice. The sacrifice of living is what we are currently facing. Living amidst the trials and tribulations of COVID-19 and living faithfully within this hardship. The sacrifice of living is spoken of in Romans 12:1: *"I beseech you therefore brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, this is your reasonable service."* God is not only calling us to maybe, some day, die for Him, but also to live for Him every day. To be a living sacrifice. To sacrifice daily on the altar of self-denial. Dying for Christ is easy, but living for Him and denying self, may be harder.

2 Timothy 2:3-4 says: *"Thou therefore should endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."*

**YOU THEREFORE SHOULD ENDURE
HARDNESS AS A GOOD SOLDIER OF
JESUS CHRIST.**

This is a beautiful verse. It is saying when we give our lives to Christ, we cast off the things of everyday life. We cast off the affairs that distract us from really and truly giving full service to Jesus Christ. That is what it means to die daily. That is what it means to be a living sacrifice and to be a true soldier.

I do not claim to know what God's intention for your life is, or how long you might live, or when you will die. It is different for each person. When Jesus told Peter how he would die, Peter asked the Lord: *"But what about John?"* Jesus responded: *"If I would have him live till I return, what is it to you? You must follow Me."* We are not here to compare. We are not here to say this is fair and that is not fair. Jesus simply called Peter and said: *"You must follow Me."*

To die for Christ means different things for different people. God is calling us to follow Him into active service. Active duty in fighting against the enemy daily. Paul states in Philippians 1:21: *"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* If we truly understand Christianity, it moves us from the fear of dying into volunteering for danger. When you sign up for Christianity, you sign up for trouble. You don't believe me?

Look at the life of Job. Job was minding his own business. **The heavenly beings were having a conversation when the enemy passed by.** And God asked Satan: "Where are you coming from?" Satan said: "I was walking around looking for somebody to mess with." And God (not the devil, but God) asked Satan: "Have you considered my servant Job?"

You see, it was not the devil's idea, but it was God's idea. Have you ever considered that the trouble you are currently in is because God referred your name to the enemy?

WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND
CHRISTIANITY, IT MOVES YOU
FROM THE FEAR OF DYING INTO
VOLUNTEERING FOR DANGER.

That, when Satan was looking for somebody to tempt, God pulled your resume and saw you were worthy of trial; because He needed **you** to interview for an opportunity to make God known.

A true soldier is somebody who goes out and fights in the name of his master. Everybody else glorify his master because of that soldier. The trials we face are sometimes not because we have to die, but are there in order for us to show that we are faithful to God. When we sign up for Christianity, we sign up for trouble. Let me illustrate this by sharing a story told by a pastor from the United States.

He was the youth leader of the church and he and his youth group went for whitewater rafting. As the youth leader, he would be the brave leader showing the people what to do and how to go through the things they were going to go through. The only problem with this pastor going with as the youth leader for whitewater rafting, was that he could not swim. As they arrived at the venue to register, he went to the front of the queue. The lady at the desk asked him whether he could swim. His answer came: "No, I cannot." Then she put a piece of paper in front of him. He asked her what it was. She answered: "A death waiver. When you sign it, you declare that you are volunteering for this journey. If you lose your life, your family does not have the right to sue us for something that you voluntarily signed up for."

When we sign up for Christianity, we sign a death waiver, saying that we volunteer for this journey and just in case our lives do not turn out the way we planned, we cannot haul God into the courts of our own conscience and hold Him guilty for what we volunteered for. When we give our lives as soldiers to Christ, we volunteer to live or to die.

**WHEN WE SIGN UP FOR
CHRISTIANITY, WE SIGN UP FOR
TROUBLE.**

Nobody said that the road was going to be easy. God did not bring us this far only to leave us. *'Our Lord does not deceive us about the road that we have to walk. He does not say to us. "Do not fear; there are no dangers in your path." He knows there are trials and dangers, and He deals with us plainly. He does not propose to take His people out of a world of sin and evil, but He points them to a never-failing refuge. His prayer for His disciples was: "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou will keep them from evil." "In the world," He says: "You shall have many tribulations; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 17:15; 16:33)' Steps to Christ, p.122, 123 (1892). {2MCP 479.2}*

Thus, when we give our lives to Christ, we might be called upon to die for Christ in the trials and tribulations of life. Just remember that you choose whether you sign up for this trouble or not. You choose whether you pledge your loyalty to God or not. Pledging your loyalty to God will enrage the devil, for your fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego made the declaration of their faith, refusing to bow down to the golden image, Nebuchadnezzar was enraged and he ordered the fire to be made seven times hotter. Being a soldier for God, makes you an enemy of Satan. He is going to come at you with all he has. He is going to try and turn you away from your stubborn loyalty to God.

John 16:33 says: *"I have told you these things, so that in Me you might have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world" (NIV).* Satan knows his time is short and he will intensify his temptations in our lives when we lay our life at the foot of the cross. Life will not always work out as we've planned. It will not always be sunshine and roses, but God knows we love Him.

**IN THIS WORLD YOU WILL HAVE
TROUBLE, BUT TAKE HEART! I
HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD"
JOHN 16:33B**

The three Hebrew boys understood that life was not going to be sunshine and roses, but still they made the declaration: "We will not bow down. Our God is able to save us, but even if he does not .." They knew the risks of being soldiers in the army of God. They were not afraid of dying if it was to come to that. As Christians, death should also not scare us. We are all going to die some or other time. Ecclesiastes 8:8 says: *"No one can keep from dying or put off the day of death. That is a battle we cannot escape; and we cannot cheat our way out."* The sooner we embrace the truth, the sooner we will be free from fear.

In boxing there is a saying: *'The guy that is not afraid of dying, is going to win.'* In life, the people who are not afraid of dying, are going to win at the game of life. John 12:25 says: *"He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto all eternity."*

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:31: *"I die daily!"* You might say: "Okay, but Paul is talking about dying to sin, not physical death." Actually, when you look at other translations, it reads: *"I face death daily!"* Paul declared that his physical, mortal life was being threatened on numerous occasions, until finally he was executed.

Paul did not fear physical death because he had already died, not physically, but to sin. He admonished us to do the same. In Romans 6:10-11 we read: *"And so, because He died, sin has no power over Him. In the same way you are to think of yourself as dead, so far as sin is concerned, but living in fellowship with God through Jesus Christ."* Paul is saying, when we die to sin, we truly live and not only do we truly learn how to live life, but we truly do not fear death.

**N BOXING THERE IS A SAYING:
'THE GUY THAT IS NOT AFRAID OF
DYING, IS GOING TO WIN.'**

Paul learnt to live for Christ. He also learnt that he is mortal and he would die. As the sword of the executioner descended on the head of Paul and the shadow of death gathered around him, his mind grasped the Saviour's promise that says: *"I will raise them to life in the last days"* (John 6:40). He did not fear physical death because he had lived life to the best of his ability. He did not fear physical death because he knew that death in this life was not the end. He counted it pure joy when he faced trials. He counted it a living sacrifice to be called worthy to die for his Saviour.

Some of you are so careful in living your lives, that you might as well not live at all. The Christian life involves risks and dangers and those things make your life worthwhile. Live each day as if it was your last day. If you live each day as if it was your last, certainly one day when it will be your last day, you will be ready.

If today was the last day in your life, what would you do? Would you do the things you planned for the day? Almost everything falls away in the face of death. If I shove your head down the water right now and I do not allow you to come up for breath, and you are brought face to face with your Maker, would you worry about money? Would you worry about the terrible things your boss did and the unfairness of how the company has treated you? Would you worry about food? Would you worry about clothes? The answer is no.

Facing death daily helps us to focus, to concentrate on the things of life that are truly important. The best way of avoiding the trap of thinking you have something to lose is to always remember that you are going to die some or other time.



**SOME OF YOU ARE SO CAREFUL IN
LIVING YOUR LIVES, THAT YOU
MIGHT AS WELL NOT LIVE AT ALL.**

YouTube



To watch the animated YouTube video of this episode scan this QR code with your phone.

Podcast



To watch and download a short motivational clip on TikTok about this episode scan this QR code with your phone.

TikTok



To listen to the audio of this episode on podcast scan this QR code with your phone.



*Northern Conference, Pastoral Counselling Department
Revive, Refresh, Restore
flemingn@nc.adventist.org
Cell: +27836584296
Author: Nandi Fleming
Editors: Kobus & Adele Beukes*