

No Greater Love

I would like begin by telling two true stories of outstanding courage.

I am writing this article in the beautiful village of Bamburgh on the north-east coast of England where, in a pretty little cottage on Church Street, a young lady by the name of Grace Horsely Darling died of tuberculosis on October 20, 1842. Grace lies awaiting her resurrection in the nearby church-yard in a tomb that befits a queen.



Four years before her death at the tender age of twenty-two, Grace, who lived in the lonely Longstone lighthouse on one of the wild and wind-swept Farne Islands, selflessly braved an incredibly violent storm and, with her aging father, William, rowed their tiny boat out to the rocks where the SS Forfarshire, a luxury paddle steamer, had developed boiler problems, lost power and had been broken in two by the tempest. Although many of the passengers had already drowned, Grace and her father were able to save nine of the Forfarshire's crew members and get them back to the safety of the lighthouse.

In the second story, we will travel around the world from nineteenth century England to twentieth century Vietnam. Here we [reproduce](#) a brief story which was printed in the February 1987 issue of "The Missileer", a U.S. Air Force newspaper: ¹

The mortar rounds landed in an orphanage run by a missionary group in the small Vietnamese village. The missionaries and one or two children were killed outright and several more children were wounded, including one girl about eight years old.

People from the village sent for help to a neighbouring town that had radio contact with the American forces. Finally a U.S. doctor and nurse arrived in a jeep with their medical kits. They established that the young girl was the most critically injured. Without quick action, she would die from shock and loss of blood.

A blood transfusion was imperative so a donor with a matching blood type was required. A quick test showed that neither American had the correct blood type, but several of the uninjured orphans did.

The doctor spoke some pidgin Vietnamese, and the nurse a smattering of high-school French. Using that combination together with much impromptu sign language, they tried to explain to their young, frightened audience that unless they could replace some of the girl's lost blood, she would certainly die. Then they asked if anyone would be willing to give blood to help.

Their request was met with wide-eyed silence. After several long moments, a small hand slowly and waveringly went up, dropped back down, and then went up again.

"Oh, thank you," the nurse said in French. "What is your name?"

"Hung," came the mumbled reply.

Hung was quickly laid on a pallet, his arm swabbed with alcohol, and the needle inserted in his vein. Through this ordeal Hung lay stiff and silent. After a moment, he let out a shuddering sob, quickly covering his face with his free hand.

"Is it hurting, Hung?" the doctor asked.

Hung shook his head but after a few moments another sob escaped, and once more he tried to cover up his crying. Again the doctor asked him if the needle hurt, and again Hung shook his head.

But now his occasional sobs gave way to a steady, silent crying, his eyes screwed tightly shut, his fist in his mouth to stifle his sobs.

The medical team was concerned because the needle should not have been hurting him. Something was obviously very wrong. At this point, a Vietnamese nurse arrived. Seeing the little one's distress, she spoke to him, listened to his reply, and answered him in a soothing voice.

After a moment, the boy stopped crying, opened his eyes and looked questioningly at the Vietnamese nurse. When she nodded, a look of great relief spread over his face. Looking up, the Vietnamese nurse said quietly to the Americans, "He thought he was dying. He misunderstood you. He thought you had asked him to give all his blood so the little girl could live."

"But why would he be willing to do that?" asked the navy nurse.

The Vietnamese nurse repeated the question to the little boy, who answered simply, "She's my friend."

Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for a friend.

The final sentence of this inspiring story is, of course, paraphrased from the Bible – from John 15:13. Let us take a look at the actual scripture from the Revised Standard Version:

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

This scripture raises many questions. Here are a few that came to my mind: When Jesus said this, was He just referring to Himself and His own sacrifice? Or was He again foretelling how His disciples and many other Christians would die? Must all true Christians literally die for their friends? What was Jesus telling His people here?

The purpose of this article is to examine this scripture – John 15:13, and to explain in what way (or ways) we, as Christians at the beginning of this twenty-first century, are to lay down our lives for our friends.

Christians who gave their lives for their friends

John 15:13 is not just talking about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In this whole section of scripture in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of John, Jesus is talking about the love that should exist between members of God's church. It is not just a casual suggestion or a nice idea that we can adopt if we, individually, want to! God repeats it, again through His "apostle of love," in I John 3:16:

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

"We ought to lay down our lives"! God expects it of us!

Since the death of Jesus Christ, many true Christians have laid down their lives and have died for their friends; for their brethren; for their fellow-members of God's church; and for their greatest Friends, God the Father and Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us that we are His friends if we do what He commands us to:

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

It follows that, if we are His friends, we may call Him our Friend.

Space does not allow me to go into the details of the many, many Christians, our brothers and sisters in Christ of earlier times, who literally laid down their lives, either in defending the truth of God (which we have sometimes taken for granted) or in defending or concealing fellow-members from persecutors. Although I cannot go into all the details here, I will mention a few examples. In the Old Testament we read of God's people who were willing to die for their Friend's way of life. In [the third chapter of Daniel](#), we find Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, three exceptional young men who were willing to suffer and die in a fiery furnace. In [chapter 6 of the same book](#), we learn that Daniel himself was willing to die in a lions' den rather than to forsake His Friend's way of life.

Notable martyrs of the New Testament era include John the Baptist ([Matthew 14:2-12](#)), Stephen ([Acts 7:51-60](#)) and James ([Acts 12:1-2](#)). The apostle Paul had many close brushes with death in his years of service and dedication to God and His people. He lists some of these in [II Corinthians chapter 11](#). It may be that, when the Jews in Lystra stoned Paul, he did actually die and was resurrected back to physical life shortly afterwards ([Acts 14:19-20](#)). Paul tells us that, prior to his eventual execution in Rome, he had no fear of his impending death. At least a couple of opportunities for

escape had presented themselves to Paul on his journey to Rome ([Acts 27 and 28](#)) but he declined them because he knew that the time for his death was right. He wrote to Timothy and told him that he was "ready to be offered" ([II Timothy 4:6-7](#)) as he was sure that he had completed the job that God had given him to do.

We think of Paul as being very brave for coming so close to physical death so often and each time bouncing back to continue his role in God's work. Paul certainly was brave for enduring these physical trials, but his courage and love are displayed even more vividly in Romans 9:3:

For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race.

Paul was bitterly disappointed that the great majority of his fellow Jews were rejecting Christ. Not only was he willing to lay down his physical life for them, but he would have actually forfeited his *eternal* life in God's Kingdom if such action would have been necessary to guarantee the widespread conversion of the Jews. This is true courage! This is true love!

Peter, before he received the gift of the Holy Spirit, told Jesus emphatically that he would lay down his life for his Master and Friend ([Matthew 26:31-35](#)). Yet shortly afterwards he fled from Jesus' persecutors and then denied Him three times ([Matthew 26:69-75](#)). After receiving and growing for many years in God's Spirit, Peter did eventually lay down his life for his Friend ([John 21:16-19](#); [II Peter 1:13-15](#)).

All of the other original apostles, except John (we believe) were martyred along with many other Christians of their era. Some of the gruesome methods that were used on them are listed in [the eleventh chapter of Hebrews](#). Persecution and martyrdom continued and even intensified in the years following the death of the apostle John.

Polycarp, who is considered to have been the first "post-Biblical" apostle, was martyred at Smyrna at the age of eighty-six. The story of his martyrdom, if true, is both inspiring and absolutely astounding. Whether members of God's true church or professing "Christians" in name only, thousands were put to death in the persecutions of the first four centuries after Christ's death and resurrection. In the sixth century AD, approximately one hundred thousand people belonging to a group called the Paulicians – thought to have been our brethren from the church's "Pergamos era" – were slaughtered by command of the Byzantine empress, Theodora.

Die for our friends?

But what about us? What about the members of God's church in this era? Permit me to reword the question I asked at the beginning of this article: Is it, or will it at some future time, be necessary for us to literally lay down our physical lives – to die for our friends – either for our fellow members of God's church or for our greatest Friends: God the Father and Jesus Christ?

For the members of the Philadelphia era of God's church, the answer is simply stated in verses 8 and 10 of Revelation chapter 3:

I know your works: behold I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it: for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name... Because you have kept the word of my patience [RSV: my word of patient endurance], I also will keep you from the hour of temptation [trial], which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

God promises protection to the Philadelphia brethren, and we can be sure that this is a Rock-solid promise! However, we should be careful not to be complacent about it. It is highly likely that the Philadelphia overlaps into the Laodicean era in the same way as the Sardis era overlapped into the Philadelphia era (and so on all the way back to the original Ephesus era of the church). To put it another way, the Laodicean church is, perhaps, *coming out of* the Philadelphian church. Or, conversely, the Philadelphian church might be *coming out of* the Laodicean church.

Although God's promise to the Philadelphia church is unconditional, we should keep in mind that true members of the Philadelphia church are to be identified as having kept God's Word, having not denied His name, and having kept His word of patient endurance. It doesn't matter who *claims* to be the Philadelphia church; those who do not meet these three criteria may not count themselves as members of the Philadelphia church and thus may not claim God's promise of protection through the end-time trials and persecutions. We all need to wake up and listen to the frequent and strong warnings against Laodicean attitudes that may still exist within God's true church today!

Devoted to giving

There is another way we can lay down our lives for our friends and, rather than having a morbid fear of end-time persecutions, this is what we should be concentrating on.

This other way is to lay down our old, sinful lives – to allow them to be crucified with Christ. To live brand-new lives as Christians. In fact, to allow Jesus Christ to live His life in and through each of us. These concepts are covered in more detail in [the second chapter of Galatians](#) and [the fourth chapter of II Corinthians](#). Just as Jesus' life was (and is) totally dedicated to loving and serving His Father and His junior brothers and sisters, so must our new life be – given and spent in loving service. One writer wisely described true friendship as "when we totally devote our lives to giving to others." Jesus echoes this concept in John 13:34-35:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.

Jesus says that we are to be recognized as true Christians, not by riches, not by our eloquence as speakers, not by our ability to talk others into conversion, not by our talent to recall scriptural chapter and verse or to understand and explain the fine details of prophecy – but by how much we love each other!

We need to be asking ourselves, not only "Would I lay down my physical life for my friends?" or "Would I lay down my life for God as Jesus Christ laid His life down for us?" – but rather, "Am I laying down my life for them on a daily basis?"

Greater love has no man!

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Additional scriptures quoted in this article

John 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Daniel 3:1-30 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at

what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonied, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every

people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.

Daniel 6:1-28 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore

displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den. Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Matthew 14:2-12 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

Acts 7:51-60 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Acts 12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

II Corinthians 11:23-33 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I

beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

Acts 14:19-20 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Acts 27:1-44 & 28:1-16 And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort, named Julius. And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for. And putting to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. And when we had sailed across the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy, and put us on board. We sailed slowly for a number of days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go on, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea. As much time had been lost, and the voyage was already dangerous because the fast had already gone by, Paul advised them, saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." But the centurion paid more attention to the captain and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. And

because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to put to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, looking northeast and southeast, and winter there.

And when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close inshore. But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land; and when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven. And running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the boat; after hoisting it up, they took measures to undergird the ship; then, fearing that they should run on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and so were driven. As we were violently storm-tossed, they began next day to throw the cargo overboard; and the third day they cast out with their own hands the tackle of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars appeared for many a day, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned. As they had been long without food, Paul then came forward among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and should not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. I now bid you take heart; for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and lo, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we shall have to run on some island."

When the fourteenth night had come, as we were drifting across the sea of Adria, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. So they sounded and found twenty fathoms; a little farther on they sounded again and found fifteen fathoms. And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let out four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come. And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the boat into the sea, under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat, and let it go. As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. Therefore I urge you to take some food; it will give you

strength, since not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." And when he had said this, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. (We were in all two hundred and seventy-six persons in the ship.) And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea. Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to bring the ship ashore. So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders; then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. But striking a shoal they ran the vessel aground; the bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was broken up by the surf. The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape; but the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their purpose. He ordered those who could swim to throw themselves overboard first and make for the land, and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all escaped to land.

After we had escaped, we then learned that the island was called Malta. And the natives showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, when a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. They waited, expecting him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead; but when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god. Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery; and Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him. And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. They presented many gifts to us; and when we sailed, they put on board whatever we needed. After three months we set sail in a ship which had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the Twin Brothers as figurehead. Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed

there for three days. And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium; and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. There we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome. And the brethren there, when they heard of us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them Paul thanked God and took courage. And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier that guarded him.

II Timothy 4:6-7 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

Matthew 26:31-35 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

Matthew 26:69-75 Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

John 21:16-19 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?

And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

II Peter 1:13-15 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

Hebrews 11:32-38 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Galatians 2:19-21 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

II Corinthians 4:10-12, 16 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which

live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward [man] is renewed day by day.

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