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5-30-2021

ENDURE HARDNESS AS A GOOD SOLDIER

The Apostle Paul went through more hardship than anyone in the New Testament. He was run out of town, stoned, arrested falsely, thrown into prison, betrayed by friends, beaten with stripes several times, called a blasphemer for preaching truth and shipwrecked, three days in the deep (dead) and more. Yet, in spite of all of this, he had learned one on one from Jesus that this was going to be his life and endured this hardship. He didn't shun it, he embraced it, knowing that if he won a soul to Jesus that it was worth it all.

In II Timothy, Paul writes to this young preacher and tells him about the hardships of being in ministry. He instructs him to study scripture, but also to endure hardships as a good soldier. Any soldier on the front line of battle knows how horrible things can get. Many have come back from war with Post Traumatic Shock from seeing all of the death and degradation. Yet, someone had to be the soldier to keep freedom. Timothy was instructed in chapter 2:5 ***"Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."*** He let him know it wasn't going to be easy.

In the U.S., most people don't understand what the suffering, persecuted church in other countries is going through. Many have been martyred for their faith. The conditions they live in are far less than the worst conditions most of us have ever seen. In spite of these hardships, they continue to preach the "freedom found in Christ" and lead countless thousands to salvation. They pay the price with persecution and oftentimes death.

Are you that type of soldier? Are you prepared for hard times if they come? Would you go AWOL spiritually to avoid these hardships? I believe we will see them in my lifetime right here in the U.S. Many ungodly laws have been passed and that is just the tip of the iceberg. Soon we will see that it will be a hate crime to preach against sin. This is happening already in Canada, and it will come here too.

Across the world those that are truly soldiers on the frontline are experiencing much hardship. Now is not the time to go AWOL. It is the time to keep our armor on and be the soldier that Jesus calls us to be. The price? It may cost of everything on this side of heaven, but the rewards that come to us from Jesus will make it worth it all.

Be determined to be that kind of soldier.