

Determined to Die

Despite our intellectual attempts to rationalize Christ's willingness to die upon the Cross on our behalf, how often, especially at Easter, are we bewildered by His determination to pursue such a horrific end? We ask ourselves, *how could Jesus do such a thing?* And, we puzzle over such determination and dedication in the face of such unimaginable cruelty.

A partial answer to this enigma may be found in John 14:31, where Jesus says, *the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.*

Jesus went to that awful death in order to show those who had despised and rejected him, the lesson of what a completely yielded spirit looks like. Jesus ignored self and relinquished Himself to God, for the specific purpose of rescuing the needy and saving the lost.

When we consider our own lives, can we say that we are ready, willing and able to relinquish and surrender ALL to God? Are we able to manifest the same degree of devotion as Jesus, and do we strive to do exactly what the Lord commands us, even to the point of death? To ponder the possibility of dying for family or friends is troubling in the extreme. Jesus spoke of this sacrifice in John 15:13, where he taught that the greatest demonstration of love was in laying down a life for a friend.

For myself, I fall miserably short of such lofty commitments. I think of the things that bring me physical and material comfort and I know how indignant and miserable I can be when things break or get lost. I pout and fuss at minor inconveniences and slights and often resist some of the very smallest of injunctions against behaviors displeasing to God.

Further, when actually faced with the imminence of death, do we die cursing, blaming, and unyielded, or do we manifest the fruits of the spirit that seek what is noble and true and surrender fully yielded to the Savior's waiting arms? Do we meet our own end with forgiveness and love for others in our hearts despite life's disappointments and unfulfilled expectations?

Whatever our answers to these deep and personal questions, the Scripture documents for us the tug and pull that Jesus, Himself, experienced, as He made His way toward an end that He knew would be undignified and undeserved. The Gospel stories recount how Jesus sweat great drops of blood as he considered the experiences that awaited Him, and how, on three occasions, he petitioned God the Father, in moments of fear and trepidation of the agony He would need to endure, to permit Him to escape the horrific penalty that sin produces.

Ever faithful, however, on each occasion, Jesus immediately submitted His own Will to the Will of the Father, recognizing that His obedience and submission to God's Will was paramount over all and necessary to save the world from sin's condemnation

Let us learn from the fierce determination of the Savior to climb upon that cursed cross to purge us from the stain of death and to present us blameless before God, *for having been crucified with Christ, we no longer live, but Christ lives in us. The life we now live in the body, we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us* (Galatians 2:20).

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