

## Without Jesus

"For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1Thes. 1:9-10).

The story is told of a college professor who visited the Fiji Islands. Being agnostic, he critically remarked to an elderly chief, "You're a great leader, but it's a pity you've been taken in by those foreign missionaries. They only want to get rich through you. No one believes the Bible anymore. People are tired of the threadbare story of Christ dying on a cross for the sins of mankind. They know better now. I'm sorry you've been so foolish as to accept their story."

The old chief's eyes flashed as he answered, "See that great rock over there? On it we smashed the heads of our victims. Notice the furnace next to it? In that oven we formerly roasted the bodies of our enemies. If it hadn't been for those good missionaries and the love of Jesus that changed us from cannibals into Christians, you'd never leave this place alive! You'd better thank the Lord for the Gospel; otherwise we'd already be feasting on you. If it weren't for the Bible, you'd now be our supper!"

## So Few Lions

In a shopping mall T-shirt stand, one can find shirts with humorous sayings; however, a few have disturbing messages. One read, "So Many Christians, So Few Lions." That shirt, with its reference to the first-century practice of throwing Christians to the lions in the Coliseum in Rome, isn't funny at all.

Persecution is no laughing matter. Not long before those brave Christians faced death in Rome's cruel sport, Paul wrote, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2Tim. 3:12). Persecution is inevitable, and it should be a matter of serious concern for all believers. In fact, at this very moment fellow Christians in East Africa and in Muslim dominated nations are suffering in Jesus' name.

What can we do about it? First, we can pray that God will comfort them in their affliction. Second, we can aid families left without support when loved ones are imprisoned. Third, we can pray for courage should we find ourselves facing persecution. When the apostle Paul was put in jail for his faith, his courage led others to be bolder in their witness (Phil. 1:14).

Want to encourage the persecuted saints? Pray. And then grow enough guts to proclaim the message of the Gospel in your own neighborhood; the same message for which some disciples have left home to preach and suffer for it. We find courage to stand when we kneel before the Lord.

## Choosing a Mate

When looking for a new car, potential buyers look at more than the exterior styling. They look under the hood, go over the interior, and look over the specs. When choosing a spouse, however, some are not so careful. They discover too late that a beautiful body can camouflage a defective mind and soul. Men and women both make this mistake, but author Carolyn Custis James was specifically concerned about men when she wrote: "A woman's interest in (spiritual matters) ought to be the first thing to catch a man's eye. Her (faith) suddenly matters when a man is facing a crisis and she is the only one around to offer encouragement."

Solomon should have known this. He was, after all, the wisest man who ever lived (1Kings 3:12, 4:29-34). But Solomon followed his own desires rather than God's command and married women whose allegiance was not to God (11:1-2). The results were disastrous.

Solomon's wives turned his heart toward other gods (vv.3-4), and God became angry with him (v.9). The kingdom of Israel was eventually divided and defeated (vv.11-13).

Strong faith is important for everyone. And it is difficult to make good decisions if our allegiance is to someone who does not know and love God. Why is it unwise for a follower of Christ to marry an unbeliever? What advice does Peter give to wives of unbelieving husbands? "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear" (1Peter 3:1-2). Faulty beliefs about God lead to faulty decisions about people.

### **Food for Thought**

YOU ARE BRAVE when you overcome your fear and help others to do the same.

YOU ARE HAPPY when you see a flower and are thankful for the blessing.

YOU ARE LOVING when your own pain does not blind you to the pain of others.

YOU ARE WISE when you know the limits of your wisdom.

YOU ARE TRUTHFUL when you admit there are times you fool yourself.

YOU ARE ALIVE when tomorrow's hope means more to you than yesterday's mistake.

YOU ARE STRONG when you take your grief and teach it to smile.

YOU ARE GROWING when you know who you are and look forward to who you will become.

YOU ARE FREE when you are in control of yourself and do not wish to control others.

YOU ARE HONORABLE when you give the other person the benefit of the doubt.

YOU ARE GENEROUS when you give from your scarcity and not from your abundance.

YOU ARE HUMBLE when you are not controlled by human respect.

YOU ARE THOUGHTFUL when you offer a helping hand when others are too embarrassed to ask.

YOU ARE MERCIFUL when you don't mention past mistakes, even though you were hurt by them.

YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL when you don't need a mirror to tell you.

YOU ARE RICH when you do not need more than what you have.

YOU ARE YOU when you don't need to be anybody else. (Joyful Reflections with Scott Seethaler)

### **A Moments Wisdom**

- Nature is the living, visible garment of God. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. 1:20).
- Until man duplicates a blade of grass, nature can laugh at his so-called scientific knowledge.
- If you love what you do, then it is no longer work. The money you earn is secondary when you love your work.
- There are two things a person should never be angry at, what they can help, and what they cannot.
- Let no man pull you low enough to hate him.