

“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!” (LUKE 6:22).

DYING FOR CHRIST?

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS:

Usually, we see it at a distance. We simply are spectators looking on. We see it on our screens as we sit in our comfortable chairs in our equally comfortable homes. We hear about Christians who are asked to deny their faith in Jesus or face death. It is a terrifying thought in so many ways. Not only is the thought of imminent death alarming enough, but there is more: We wonder deep in our hearts what we would do and what we would say. Would we stand firm or waver?

While we hope never to face such a situation, we know that our brothers and sisters have. And this should not really come as a surprise. After all, the One we follow was killed for the things He did and said. And He was clear that those who follow Him will share His lot in this regard. All who do not walk with the Spirit war against those who do.

So what would we do? Well, here is the good news: Our faith is never up to us to sustain. Faith is a gift of God that is sustained by the Holy Spirit through His Word and Sacraments. Should we ever face this situation, the words and the strength we need would be given to us. We would, in that moment, not fear the one who can kill the flesh, but look to the One who has promised us all good. We would look to the One who can and does raise up the dead. We would look to the One who has removed the sting of death with His own death and offers His resurrection life to all who follow Him.

God also gives us strength to face much less intense situations in which we are asked to deny God in order to save something we value. This is what happens each time we are tempted by any sin. We are asked to deny God in order to have the thing we want in the moment. Then also, we must turn to God for the strength to stand firm. And when we fall, thanks be to God that we can also turn to Him for forgiveness. Jesus is the assurance of that as well. Fear not the foe. Jesus is with you.

SCRIPTURES:

John 15:18–19

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

Matthew 5:10

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 10:19

“When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour.”

Matthew 5:10

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

CONVERSATION POINTS:

- What makes the thought of being persecuted for your faith in Jesus so scary?
- Who is it that sustains your faith each day?