

Facing the Martyrs

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life...” (Matt. 6:25)

Who are the martyrs?

- “When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.” (Rev. 6:9)
- Those slain
- Witnesses

Martyrdom in Early Christianity

- Martyrdom was probable for every Christian
- “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.” (1 Timothy 3:1)
- It was something to be desired

Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Romans

- For it is not my desire to act towards you as a man-pleaser, but as pleasing [God](#), even as also you please Him. For neither shall I ever have such [another] opportunity of attaining to [God](#); nor will you, if you shall now be silent, ever be entitled to the [honour](#) of a better work. For if you are silent concerning me, I shall become God's; but if you show your [love](#) to my flesh, I shall again have to run my race. Pray, then, do not seek to confer any greater favour upon me than that I be [sacrificed](#) to God while the altar is still prepared; that, being gathered together in [love](#), you may sing praise to the [Father](#), through [Christ Jesus](#), that God has deemed me, the [bishop](#) of [Syria](#), worthy to be sent for from the east unto the west. It is good to set from the world unto [God](#), that I may rise again to Him.
(Chapter 2)

Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Romans

- “[Pray](#) for me, that I may attain [the object of my desire]. I have not written to you according to the flesh, but according to the [will](#) of [God](#). If I shall suffer, you have wished [well] to me; but if I am rejected, you have [hated](#) me.” (Chapter 8)

Motives for Martyrdom

- Temporality of this world
- “And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” (1 Jn. 2:17)
- “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory...” (2 Cor. 4:17,18)

Motives for Martyrdom

- The way of the Cross
- “Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matt. 16:24-25)

Motives for Martyrdom

- Love for God
- “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” (Jn. 15:13-15)

Motives for Martyrdom

- The reward
- “Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10)
- ”This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. (2 Tim. 2:11,12)
- St. Paul couldn't describe the glory of Heaven, so he was content saying, “...eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Cor. 2:9)

Personal Lessons

- Unwavering love
 - “You shall love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind.” (Matt. 22:37)
- Steadfastness
 - “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:38,39)

Personal Lessons

- To glorify God
 - “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”
(1 Peter 4:16)
- How to respond?
- Overcome bodily pleasures
- Honestly keeping the commandments

Personal Lessons

- Testify to the Lord
- “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.”
(James 1:23)