

**Devotional Thoughts :: When God calls us into the fire****When God calls us into the fire - posted by heraldndaw, on: 2011/10/4 20:48**

Every Christian should know that the call to follow Christ is a call to death, to pain, to suffering. This is a fundamental but yet elementary truth of the gospel. Just listen to Jesus' famous call to discipleship found in Luke 9

23And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

So if Jesus says these things, and these are elementary truths why are we surprised when we hear reports such as the recent condemning of Iranian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani to death.

For those of you unfamiliar with the case, Pastor Youcef was arrested initially for apostasy then released but arrested later for protesting against the reading of the Koran in his son's school. His last arrest for which he is sentenced to death is for charges of apostasy and refusing to renounce Christ. Iran is governed by an Islamist regime so any direct attempts to evangelize are seen as a threat and an attack to the government. Today Pastor Youcef is making headlines around the world because many are condemning the unjust sentencing of death. If executed he will be the first executed in Iran for religious reasons in the last 20 years.

Sentences like these bother us because we feel the world has moved past such barbarous practices. We deceive ourselves because we feel that the hostility that the world has for the gospel has waned. But the powers that are behind the hostility have never left, they are very active. Some of us who are familiar with the culture and practices of Islamic countries may not be so surprised, because what else do you expect from a radical Islamic government. Though we are alarmed and pray for our fellow brother in Christ we find some solace and comfort that our beloved country is not so tyrannical.

This case reminded me of a very famous scripture written by the apostle Paul in the 12th chapter of Romans (Amplified)

I APPEAL to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship.

Pastor Youcef made a decisive decision to refuse to renounce Christ, with a full knowledge that his decision would end in the literal offering of his life. It is very rare to live a half-hearted walk with Christ and when pressed with a life or death choice, choose Christ.

We need to seriously consider the calling of Paul and Christ. Often in situations like this we ask ourselves would I be able to stay faithful to Christ if my life depended on it, rather than asking ourselves am I living for Christ like my life depends on it? I am far from saying we need to work for our salvation, but I want to be able to echo Paul where he says

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7)

excerpt from

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