

## SABBATH THOUGHT 2023-01-21— FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

The Marine Corp motto is *Semper Fidelis*, meaning “Always faithful.” The phrase is usually shortened to just “Semper Fi.” Marines are an elite corp of the US military whose training is among the most rigorous in the world. Many times they are the first to engage enemies face-to-face.

One important characteristic of military groups is that members must become more than individuals participating in a common goal. To be the best and most effective, teams of people must have a camaraderie built upon friendship, faithfulness, and loyalty. That dedication, or loyalty, can become so deep that members are willing to sacrifice their lives for others without hesitation.

Being a part of those close relationships is something that is never forgotten because it changes and moulds the character of the individuals to consider the needs of others above personal interests. We have all seen many examples of this—the fireman who dies trying to save someone in a burning building, the woman who risks her life on a frozen pond to rescue a child, the soldier who is killed protecting villagers, and the Secret Service agent who takes a bullet meant for his or her protectee. What each of these have in common is that the rescuers and victims had never even met each other.

What motivates someone to give their life for a complete stranger? How do these individuals overcome the natural fear of pain, suffering, and death to give up their own life for a stranger? Perhaps it simply comes down to a loving heart. However, I believe it is more than that. The personal stories behind those who gave their lives to save others more often than not include time in the military, sports, etc. Their lives were influenced so deeply they are willing to die for strangers. A soldier can hate and even kill an enemy but when the war is over, many throw down their weapons because they have a deep guilt about having been the instrument of death even though it was a worthy cause. A sports team will exhaust themselves to beat their opponent but afterwards, opposing players are seen comforting and encouraging each other. Inside military units and sports teams exists a bond between people who share a goal that cannot be achieved without the participation of every member. Their thinking is not upon the self. Someone willing to give their life for a stranger is unselfish and has learned to put the needs of others first.

Winning requires an individual to dedicate his or her efforts to the other members of the team. To become an effective military unit or sports team requires going through hard training. It is through those adversities and challenges that individuals learn about each others’ strengths and weaknesses. No one is without limitations so the true strength of the unit or team comes from the combination of the individual members working together in bonds of faithfulness and loyalty.

Jesus Christ said, “For narrow *is* the gate and **difficult is the way** that leads to life, and few are those who find it.” (Matt. 7:14). To say that the way unto eternal life is difficult is truly an understatement. We all know stories of saints who gave their lives for God. They are in the Bible and even history books such as Foxe’s Book of Martyrs. There are people we know personally who have endured great sufferings unto death. Paul listed examples of some because he knew the importance of faith and loyalty:

HEBREWS 11:32-39 Now what more can I say? For time would fail me to relate *the accounts* of Gideon, Barak also, and Samson and Jephthah, David also, and Samuel, and the prophets; 33 Who **by faith were victorious** over kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, shut *the* mouths of lions, 34 Quenched *the* fury of fire, escaped *the* edge of *the* sword, were strengthened from weakness, became mighty in war, *and* turned back the armies of foreigners. 35 Women received their dead restored to life; and **others were tortured, not accepting deliverance**, that they might obtain a superior resurrection; 36 And **others endured the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings**; yes, **and moreover, of chains and imprisonment**. 37 They were **stoned to death**, they were **sawed in two**, they were **brutally interrogated**, *and* **slaughtered by the sword**. They went about in sheepskins *and* in goatskins, being destitute, oppressed, *and* ill-treated; 38 Of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, *living* in caves and in holes in the earth. 39 But **these all**, *though* they had **received a good report through faith**, did not obtain the promise.

I think we read about the faithfulness of the great biblical personages without giving much thought to what it means. Do we view the faithfulness held by those mentioned in the Bible as simply obedience to God? Are we Semper Fidelis—*Always Faithful*. If so, faithful to what? Faithful to whom? It has to be to God and Jesus Christ and for Their purpose to save humanity. The faithfulness that Paul describes must be deeper than that of any marine unit or sports team. Everyone called by God in this age must endure severe hardships to establish them as part of that elite group called the Body of Christ. This training is so life-changing that we must become willing to give our lives for the cause. It is required that all who are part of The Body to put the purpose of God and Jesus Christ to save an entire world above their own lives. They did—and so must we. Jesus Christ set the path for us all to the kingdom through His own suffering. He said, “I am **the way**, and the truth, and **the life**; **no one comes to the Father except through Me**.” (John 14:6).

To be a part of God’s plan requires us to put Them and the Body first above all. As is the case with every military leader, recruits will only follow those who have gone through the same training and been proven on the battlefield. Jesus Christ has every right to require His people to suffer because He pioneered that path for us all:

1 PETER 4:12-19 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial among you *which is* taking place to test you, as if some strange thing *were* happening to you. 13 But to the degree that **you have a share in the sufferings of Christ**, rejoice; so

that, at the revelation of His glory, you also may rejoice exceedingly. 14 If you are reviled for *the* name of Christ, *you are* blessed because the *Spirit* of glory and the Spirit of God is resting upon you; on their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ... 16 Yet if anyone *is suffering* as a Christian, he should not be ashamed; but let him glorify God because of this, ... 18 And if **the righteous are saved with much difficulty**, what will become of the ungodly and *the* sinner? 19 For this reason also, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls *to Him* in well doing, as to a **faithful Creator**.

Semper Fidelis is deeply ingrained in every marine and it becomes the foundation of their character throughout their lives. Even when no longer a part of the corp, the standard remains. This fact is so deeply embedded in their thinking that a marine quipped, “Once a marine, always a marine.” What do God and Jesus Christ require of Their people? From the mouth of Jesus Christ:

REVELATION 2:8-11 And to the angel of the church of *the* Smyrneans write: These things says the First and the Last, Who was dead but is alive. 9 I know your works and **tribulation and poverty** (but you are rich), and the blasphemy of those who declare themselves to be Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. 10 **Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer**. Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison, **that you may be tried**; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be **faithful unto death**, and I will give you a crown of life. 11 The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.

“Faithful Unto Death.” In Latin, it is *Fidelis Usque Ad Mortem*. What God’s people must endure changes them such that, hopefully, it can said that once a saint, always a saint. Being a member of the Body of Christ is a high calling. They are called *saints* and *witnesses*. In the Greek, *saint* means a *holy one*; that is, clean and blameless before God. *Witness* comes from *martus*, which is *martyr* in the English. Why are those who are the begotten children of God called holy ones and martyrs? Because they are washed in the blood of Christ who was the Faithful Witness (Martyr) and many also gave their lives:

REVELATION 1:4-5 John to the seven churches that *are* in Asia: Grace and peace *be* to you from Him Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come; and from the seven spirits that are before His throne; 5 And from **Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness [martus]**, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

So, Jesus Christ set the standard for us of Faithful Unto Death, which is much more than being Always Faithful. Jesus endured sufferings unto death to save a world full of enemies, so *He* established *The Way* to eternal life. It requires us to suffer in like manner so that we prove we are Faithful Unto Death and are willing to die as a part of the greatest corp ever conceived—the Body of Christ. Jesus Christ our King BECAUSE He proved Himself worthy of the highest honor and position:

HEBREWS 5:7-9 Who, in the days of His flesh, offered up both prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because *He feared God*. 8 Although He was a Son, yet **He learned obedience from the things that He suffered**; 9 And having **been perfected**, He became **the Author of eternal salvation** to all those who obey Him,

He is the Author of salvation so He also became The Way to eternal life. Those who are willing and able to endure the fiery trials of this life do so to prove they will be Faithful Unto Death. Those who succeed will be made “kings and priests” (Rev. 1:6), serving as members of a Body to fulfill the purpose of the Most High God—bringing many sons and daughters unto glory<sup>1</sup>. Everyone who knows the bonds that are formed when people share in the crucible of life is forever changed. For God’s people, *Faithful Unto Death* is more than a motto: it is The Way of life to which we are called.

The Marine Corp is an elite military organization that is built upon bonds of faithfulness and loyalty. It is a tradition passed along to raw recruits by leaders who were also proven by those same high standards. Jesus Christ was the First of those who follow in His steps:

HEBREWS 2:9-14 But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than *the* angels, crowned with glory and honor on account of **suffering the death**, in order that by *the* grace of God **He [Jesus] Himself might taste death for everyone**; 10 Because it was fitting for Him, for Whom all things *were created*, and by Whom all things *exist*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the **[Prince] of their salvation perfect through sufferings**. 11 For both **He Who is sanctifying and those who are sanctified are all of one**; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 Saying, “I will declare Your name to My brethren; in *the* midst of *the* church I will sing praise to You.” 13 And again, “**I will be trusting in Him**.” And again, “Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me.” 14 Therefore, since **the children are partakers of flesh and blood, in like manner He also took part in the same**, in order that through death He might annul him who has the power of death—that is, the devil;

Brethren, this life is meant to be a harsh training. Only through fiery trials is our character formed and established to serve in the Body of Christ. It is the standard by which every generation fulfills the highest calling of all. That is why honor and glory are given to those who are found *Fidelis Usque Ad Mortem*.

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

Steven Greene  
[sabbathreflections@gmail.com](mailto:sabbathreflections@gmail.com)

---

<sup>1</sup> Heb. 2:10.