

## “It’s To Die For”

Someone is eating big, piece of pie. A friend asks, “Is it any good?” “It’s to die for,” is the reply. Just how good is it? The pie is sooooo good that you would be willing to die for a piece of it. You couldn’t ask for a better compliment.

Would you really give your life or even risk your life for a piece of pie or cake or brownie? Yet, there are some things worth dying for. Many will die for their country. They believe that the freedoms afforded to us as Americans is worth giving up their lives to protect for future generations. An American Revolutionary hero as he was about to be executed said, “I regret that I have but one life to give for my country.” During the Civil War, thousands upon thousands were willing to die for their beliefs. Is there anything valuable enough to you that it is worth dying for? What about your faith? Are you willing die for the cause of Christ?

A life not worth dying for is not worth living. Satan argued with God that a man, even like Job, will do anything to spare his life, “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life” (Job 2:4). Job’s wife even encouraged him to curse God and die. Job would rather die than reject his Creator. Men like Job are not easily found in modern America. Most would die for a cigarette before they would even make a small sacrifice to serve the Lord.

Some things are not worth dying for. The sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, found out the hard way. As priests, they offered up incense using fire from a strange source and not from the altar. They both died for their disobedience (Lev. 10:1-3). While transporting the ark by way of oxen, King David got a man killed. The ark was only to be moved by the Levites using special polls. When the oxen stumbled and the ark shifted, Uzzah lifted up his hand to steady it. God struck him dead. Again, Judas having betrayed the Lord for a mere thirty pieces of silver could no longer bear his guilt. So he went out and hung himself. Even the great and courageous prophet Elijah wanted to lay down under a juniper tree in the desert and die because Jezebel was persecuting him. God would not let him give up and die. Some things are not worth dying for.

What is worth dying for? Daniel shows us that what you eat and drink is worth dying for. No; he did not find a pie or brownie worth dying for. As a young Jewish captive in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, Daniel was told to eat and drink things forbidden in the Law of Moses. “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (Dan. 1:8-14). Daniel was willing to risk his life for his convictions about eating and drinking.

When I was twelve years old, I heard a stirring lesson on the evils of drinking. That night in prayer I vowed to God that I would never drink a drop of alcohol. To this day, I have never taken a drink. If someone were to put a knife to my throat and demand me to drink, I would have a decision to make. Is my promise to God worth dying for?

Daniel had three friends who also shared in his great convictions. Nebuchadnezzar had made a great gold image and commanded all those present to fall down and worship it or face the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:4-6). Daniel’s three friends would not for they would only worship God and never an idol. They were cast in the furnace, but God spared their lives. Why? Maybe to teach Nebuchadnezzar and others a lesson: worshiping the one and only God is worth dying for.

Once, a woman was married to a man who hated for her to go to church. On a Sunday morning before church, her drunken husband found her getting dressed for church. In a rage, he threw her up against a wall, cocked the gun in his hand and held to her head. He warned her, “Now, where do you think you are going?” She replied, “If you pull the trigger, I am going to go be with God, if you don’t, I am going to church.”

Much later in his life, Daniel was called upon to face another life threatening dilemma. In an effort to trap Daniel, certain Medo-Persian politicians had King Darius sign an irrevocable law prohibiting everyone from petitioning anyone but the king for thirty days. Daniel always prayed with his windows open toward Jerusalem three times a day. He was caught and cast into the lion's den. Again, God spared the life of his faithful servant.

Would you sacrifice your life to pray, or would you sacrifice your prayers to save your life? Many Christians sacrifice their prayer life for a lot less. Others would make a deal with the Devil not to pray for thirty days so as to spare their faithless lives.

Later during the time of the Medo-Persian empire, another Jew was called upon to risk her life. Esther was a simple Jewish girl who had become King Ahasuerus' wife and queen. The king's right-hand man, Haman, hated the Jews and got permission from the king to sign an irrevocable law calling for the extermination of the Jewish people. Esther's cousin Mordecai got wind of this plan. He approached Esther and asked her to speak to the king and save her people. She warned Mordecai that if she went to the king unbidden she would die. Then she said, "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" (Est. 4:16). She was willing to die for God's people.

A little boy's sister was dying. She needed a blood transfusion to save her life. Only her brother's blood was a match. His parents explained to him the situation as best they could to a five year old. He agreed. After they started the transfusion the boy watched his life-giving blood leave his body and enter into that of his sick sister. He looked up to the nurse with tears in his eyes and with a trembling voice he asked, "How long before I die?" He was willing to give his life for his sister. Are you willing to give your life for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

After Christ died for you and me, a Christian named Stephen went to his fellow Jews and preached Christ. At one point in his sermon, "they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him" (Acts 7:57,58). Stephen was willing to die for preaching Christ to the lost and dying world. Are you willing to risk your life to bring the words of eternal life to others who are dead in sin?

Thomas told the other disciples that they should all go up to Jerusalem to die with Jesus (Jn. 11:16). On the night Jesus was betrayed, Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death" (Luke 22:33). None of the disciples at this time were willing to die for Christ. Peter in just a few hours would deny Christ three times. Later, all but John sacrificed their mortal lives for Christ. Countless others have become martyrs ever since.

Once, a wife was brought in to encourage her husband to recant of his heresy. She replied that she would rather catch his head in her apron than to have him deny Christ. You might be willing to die for Christ, but would you be able to stand there and encourage your loved ones to be faithful unto death?

Those who are willing to die for Christ understand that the death of a Christian is gain. It is to depart from this life and be with Christ (Phil. 1:21-24). They understand that "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). They are willing to die for Him who was willing to die for them (Rom. 5:8).

Are you willing to die for your obedience to God, true worship to the one and only God, prayer, God's people, preaching the truth, and for your Savior? Remember all the blessings of eternal life are on the other side of your funeral. They are to die for.

– Daniel R. Vess, The Forum, October 7, 2007