

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with enduring hardship like a good soldier. Timothy was familiar with Paul's sufferings (2 Tim. 3:10-12; 2 Cor. 11:22-29; etc.). So Paul invited him to share in this suffering. As a good soldier he was to "fight the good fight" (1 Tim. 1:18). In Paul's last letter he wrote: **"Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs – he wants to please his commanding officer"** (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

Jesus **"did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many"** (Matt. 20:28). Sadly, many "join the church" for exactly the opposite reason. They don't want to "serve", they want to "be served". That's why they "shop" for a church that meets "their" needs. They don't want to be on a "battle ship", they want to be on a "cruise ship". This, of course, is not at all why Christ came to earth or why soldiers enlist in the army.

To illustrate how one soldier "endured hardship" let us consider the heroic service of Australian soldier, Robert "Jock" McLaren during W.W. II. He began as a private in a field workshop repairing and maintaining artillery, but ended up as a guerrilla fighter operating behind enemy lines in the jungle. He was captured twice but escaped both times. His second escape involved a rag tag group of prisoners and a 270 mile trip across the sea in a homemade dugout canoe. They went all the way from Berhala Island in Northeastern Borneo to join with a group of guerrilla fighters far away in Mindanao. McLaren's success, and his reputation for reckless bravery, caused the Japanese to publish his picture and offer a reward for him dead or alive. A book about his amazing exploits was published in 1957 under the title: *One Man War – the Jock McLaren Story*.

The suffering for which he is most famous, however, happened in 1944. He had again parachuted behind enemy lines into the jungles of Mindanao when he suffered an appendicitis attack. Since he was a veterinarian before the war, he had enough medical training to accurately diagnosed his problem. He felt confident, therefore, that he would die if he did not have surgery. Befriended by a local chieftain he used his hut as an operating room. He found a Filipino medical student to help who had dropped out of the university without graduating. While the student refused to do the surgery, he did agree to assist McLaren as he operated on himself. They tore up bed sheets to use as bandages and made an operating table out of floor boards. McLaren took two large dessert spoons and bent them to use as retractors. They were sterilized, together with a pair of scissors, forceps, a needle, and a razor blade. Fiber from a banana leaf would be used to stitch the wound. When everything was arranged to his satisfaction, McLaren hoisted himself to his makeshift operating table and positioned a small mirror over his abdomen. There was no anesthetic and he refused liquor as he wanted to be as mentally alert as possible.

Australian journalist Hal Richardson recounted McLaren's description of the surgery. With the aid of the mirror McLaren made the necessary incision and then prized the muscles apart as he had done many times while operating on farm animals. He then inserted the spoons to hold them in place. He then removed his appendix and stitched himself up with the sewing needle. The surgery took 4 ½ hours. When it was over McLaren lay back and let his body go limp in an ecstasy of trembling. He was especially proud that he did not sever his muscles. This enabled him in only a few short days to recover to the point that he could take a tommy gun, pistol, and ammunition belt and disappear into the jungle. He had to do so as enemy soldiers were only a half hour away.

Please prayerfully consider this Scripture about suffering that Paul wrote to the Colossians: **“Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and fill up in my own flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of His body, which is the church” (Col. 1:24).** We know for certain that Christ completed everything God had commanded Him to do. Remember! Just before He died Jesus said: **“It is finished” (Jn. 19:30)** The Greek word used here is “tetelestai”. This is a technical word used by accountants and means “paid in full”. Jesus paid sins debt in full and is now seated at the right hand of God (Col. 3:1).

Jesus, however, is not permitted to preach the Gospel. His suffering is now over. After making His one sacrifice for sins, He went back to heaven and sat down on the right hand of God (Heb. 10:12). It is OUR job to preach the Gospel. The Great Commission is for us and is found in all four Gospels and also the book of Acts (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:45-49; Jn. 20:21-23; Acts 1:7-8). Jesus doesn’t go into all the world and suffer for preaching the Gospel, He commanded us to do that. In this way, we, like Paul, can participate in **“the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death” (Phil. 3:10).** Our suffering does not take away sins, but leads people to Jesus so He can take away their sins.

So endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. The weapons we use are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds (2 Cor. 10:3-6). Even though our weapons are spiritual, we will still be called upon to suffer hardship as we use them. We enlist in His army as volunteers, and like Paul, need to fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith (2 Tim. 4:7). So, find something good to do for others, and do it like a good soldier, even if it involves suffering!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce