

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

351

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with this Scripture: **“Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.” (Col 1:24)**

This has always been a very difficult verse for me to understand. It still is. When Jesus died He said: “It is finished” (Jn. 19:30). This is an accounting word “tetelestai” which means “paid in full”. The death of Jesus paid sin's debt in full! How then did Paul's sufferings fill up in his flesh anything lacking in Christ's afflictions? The best explanation that I can even partially understand was given by the late Seth Wilson. He pointed out that while the sufferings of Christ were totally complete to insure our salvation, these sufferings of Christ on the cross did not directly bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. The sufferings of Paul did that. Since the plan of God to evangelize the world involved Paul, and since Paul's efforts involved suffering, then in this way Paul's afflictions filled up what was lacking in Christ's afflictions.

So, in today's letter we will consider the sufferings of missionary Bruce Olson that brought the Gospel to the violent stone age tribe of Motilone Indians in South America. The following information is taken from his book *Bruchko*. (“Bruchko” is the way the natives pronounced “Bruce Olson”)

- In 1961, at 19 years of age, Bruce Olson felt called of God to evangelize the Motilone Indians.
- He therefore withdrew his life savings and purchased a one way ticket to South America.
- He had no missionary training, spoke no Spanish, and had only \$70 left. The one friend that he expected to meet at the airport never showed up.
- The Motilones lived in a wild jungle area and no outsider who visited there had survived.
- Communicating in Latin through a Catholic priest Bruce bought a mule and some basic supplies. Then he set out by himself into the jungle to evangelize the Indians.
- On his first encounter with the Stone Age Motilones they shot him in the leg with an arrow. Then they pulled out the arrow with strips of his flesh hanging on the barbed end.
- They temporarily spared his life but after several weeks as their prisoner the main chief decided that he had to die on the next day.
- Even though Bruce was almost dead from infection and diarrhea, and barely able to walk, something prompted him to escape. He did!
- Without maps or food he “somehow” made it to “civilization” too weak to even speak.
- Once he regained his strength, he returned to the jungle, placed gifts on a Motilone trail. He had to wait a month for them to be found.
- The Indians took his gifts but placed 4 arrows in the ground as a warning for him to leave.
- Bruce removed the arrows and covered them with gifts. Fortunately they decided not to kill him.

- Some time later he contracted hepatitis and was at the point of death when an oil company helicopter “accidentally” found him and took him to a hospital. His liver was permanently damaged and he was warned not to return to the jungle. He returned anyhow.
- Eating live grubs and other Indian food caused him to vomit repeatedly.
- Once when he had nothing to eat for days, he pulled an 18" long parasite out of his mouth.
- He deliberately gave himself pink eye to help them understand the power of antibiotics.
- He survived epidemics of measles and other diseases that ravaged the jungle community.
- His best friend and first convert was killed by poachers who were stealing Motilone land.
- His fiancé, who was studying to be a medical doctor, was killed in a car wreck.
- In 1988 Bruce was captured by the communist-inspired National Liberation Army and tortured for ten months.
- Before age 50, however, Bruce had learned 15 languages and pioneered in computer translation of tribal dialects.
- By the grace of God he became close personal friends with four different Presidents of Columbia and has spoken before the United Nations and the Organization of American States.
- Through his efforts resolution #102 of the INCORA, 108,909,000 square meters in Columbia set aside as a land reservation for the Motilone-Bari Community.
- Christian Motilones have sent out 30 teams among the non-evangelized tribes in N.E. Columbia.
- Bi-lingual schools and health clinics are springing up throughout the jungles.
- Because of sufferings of Bruce Olson thousands have been saved and whole communities have been transformed.
- Olson is now an old man. He was born Nov. 10, 1941. As of January 2021, however, he was still active in his ministry.
- One historian notes: *“Bruce’s work continues today. More than 30 professionals have graduated from Colombian universities, among which are physicians, accounts, translators, Bible scholars, forest rangers, agronomists, and more than 400 as technical apprentices and high school graduates. All the students are back among their respective communities sharing the expertise of their newly acquired knowledge.”*
- Perhaps in the life of men like Bruce Olson God is filling up what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of His Body, which is the church.
- Truly we enter into the Kingdom of God through many hardships (Acts 14:22).

Please prayerfully consider again these inspired words of the Apostle Paul: **“Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.” (Col 1:24)**

I love you,
Grandpa Boyce