

CHRISTIAN STEWARDS AFTER V-DAYS

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"For their sakes I sanctify myself." This is the word of Jesus referring to His disciples in prayer. The deepest sense of self-giving which motivated His life, nearing the end, was ultimate, adequate, and absolute for His remaining days on earth. We look to Him as the "perfect steward" and feel His spirit of self-giving.

Whether in war time, or in peace life, the spirit of giving one's self to what he believes is best is revealed in selfless services. A newspaper writer reports from the Pacific War Theater, traveling on a large convoy troop ship: An enemy submarine has spotted them, and sends the torpedo aimed at their mid-ship. A light cruiser in the convoy, seeing the peril of the larger ship in the way of the torpedo, quickly zigzags into the path of the torpedo to take the fire to death. So were the thousands of men on board the sheltered ship saved through the intentioned self-giving of the ship which intercepted the fire. The lesser sank for the life of the greater. For their sakes they sank.

A May the 13th dispatch of an International News Service carries Julian Hartt's story of a young Seventh Day Adventist, 26 years old, who was doing non-combat service as a medical aid with the 77th Division on Okinawa. One Saturday, his day of rest, he was reading his Bible. He never worked on Saturday by special permission granted by his commanding officer, but a sheer 50 foot escarpment had to be taken. It had to be climbed with ropes in the face of terrible fire. The commanding officer pointing out the situation, asked him, "Will you go?" He replied, "It's all right with me, but you'll have to wait a few minutes while I finish my Bible reading." Finally, he closed his Bible, and his commanding officer and

the attacking platoon were joined by the aid and climbed the ropes together. The enemy fire blazed even more intensely than the troops had expected. Casualties were everywhere. In the confusion, the Yanks withdrew—the fourth time they had been driven off the same escarpment. At first, the aid was thought to be among those missing. Then he was seen still atop the ridge, waving, signifying he wanted to lower the wounded down the hill. All around him bursts of mortar and blasts of heavy artillery rained. The commander ordered him to come down off the ridge. The aid refused and began lowering the first casualty by rope.

The enemy drew closer; danger to the medical aid increased as the enemy started tossing grenades. The Yanks at their base on the lower ridge replied in kind.

For three sweating hours, the slender aid tugged and hauled the wounded down the cliff side. Gently, with ebbing strength of aching muscles, he held to the ropes, lowering the casualties, while his buddies below tossed grenades first by the score then by the hundreds. When the aid had lowered the last wounded (75 were hit on top of the cliff) he then slipped down wearily himself. His buddies had expended his outfit's entire supply of 1,250 grenades. The grenades formed a wall of flaming explosions between the heroic unarmed aid man and the cold steel of the enemy seeking to climb the other side. When the aid returned to his base, he walked to the rear quietly to resume reading his Bible. For their sakes, he gave himself.

Four army chaplains, one Hebrew, one Roman Catholic, and two Protestants, standing on the deck of their sinking ship, having given their life preservers to their men in peril, go

down together. They gave themselves for the sake of their men.

The steward gives his life for those persons and causes which he values uppermost. Truly, whether in war or in peace, the steward sanctifies himself for their sakes.

When the Serviceman is at the point of utter helplessness save for the help of God, prayer is often offered. Such a crisis is a caution to the steward of the unsearchable riches of God in prayer. What a typical prayer is the advertisement by Young & Rubican, Inc., Chicago, published in the **Chicago Daily Tribune**, Tuesday, May 15, 1945. The picture above the prayer is a kneeling serviceman, helmet beside him on the surf midst seething sand, a cooling gun part beside the exposed heel of a half-buried soldier, and in the background a shredded debris of the skeleton of a ship on the beach. Beneath the picture is this prayer:

"A STRANGE SORT OF PRAYER"

"Well, God, here we are.

"You up there. Me down here, with a burning sun, a mess of insects, too much ocean, and other buddies just as lonely as me.

"Oh, God, how nice it must be back home, with Germany licked, and the folks humming, and some of the boys all finished with the fighting.

"But I guess that wasn't meant for me, was it? And tomorrow and tomorrow I'll still be dodging bullets, still feeling lost in the middle of the night.

"Well, no hard feelings.

"I'll go wherever You say, and do whatever You want me to. For You know what's best for me.

"But say, if You can only get the people back home to remember me, maybe they'll still bear down. Maybe they'll still send us their blood, still stay on the job, still keep making the stuff we need.

"You see, God, I'd like to get home, too."

One's first reaction is, what a superficial prayer from a Christian viewpoint. God is largely transcendent; the soldier is concerned with his own safety. The prayer is obviously a propagandized advertisement to encourage labor to stay on the job and to get blood donors to continue giving blood. It is a prayer that a Jew, Christian, or Deist could pray, supposedly without offense to Deists, Christians, or Jews. On second thought, however, it is a step in the right direction. It is a challenge to make the Stewardship of prayer a Christian adventure—God is Father; man is not left alone by God in the hours of loneliest tragedy. Home is the heart's desire of most servicemen. A soldier has gone forward in reconciliation, not to be bitter toward God on a death-strewn beach alone, "feeling lost in the middle of the night". It is a sense of Stewardship vocation in his petition, "I'll go wherever You say, and do whatever You want me to. For You know what's best for me."

Strafed beach religion, prayers in fox holes, fresh fish and water on rubber raft adrift, midst prayers and death and pain, challenge us to an adequate, and absolute adventure of the true meaning of Christ's self-giving and God's sufficiency to His child in trial. The challenge of V-E Day and of V-J Day is equally the challenge to religion that is real on beach-head and at headquarters, in pulpit and in pew. For their sakes, one may give himself in the Stewardship of prayer, the highest expression of one's religion in earnest.

It is not accidental that the 15th Chapter of I Corinthians closes as it does and ushers in the 16th Chapter with a timely concern. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Now concerning the col-

lection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." The collection is very close to the resurrection in Paul's thinking and in the Stewardship way of life.

The steward has been associated with money management, as well as with life dedication. He is responsible for both reality and personality, as well as with money management. So dedicated was the life of Samuel Barnett in London, that Toynbee Hall became known as the city of good life in the midst of wicked slums. Dr. Washburn uses him as the outstanding English philanthropist in terms of Christian ministries to those in need.

St. Vincent De Paul, patron saint of the Roman Catholic Charities, likewise so managed to meet the needs of people in distress in hospitals, orphanages, old age homes, etc., that his name stands for gracious mercy and cheerful giving. St. Francis Assisi renounced wealth in order to use all of his power of body, mind, and soul in the service of those who were haunted by dire need. He renounced all in order that he might possess the confidence of men to whom he gave his all, and he literally died in the "bosom embrace of sister poverty".

John Wesley's sermon, "The Good Steward", suggests the Christian use of money in earning, spending, giving, and saving to be the Christian's financial stewardship. For the sake of those in need, one's money may be sanctified as truly as one's self.

The recent "Crusade for Christ,"

which, at this time has received subscriptions for over \$27,000,000 and cash of \$17,500,000 represents money sanctified for the sake of Christian reconstruction, rehabilitation, and relief.

Some of this money will be spent for missionaries. Earnest Stanley, British missionary internee, walked out of the education building in Santo Thomas University in Manila when negotiations started between Col. Brady of the Allies and Lt. Col. Hayashi of the Japanese. Missionary Stanley offered himself as a target for either Japanese or American fire if anything went wrong.

An Oklahoma father declined to give for the "Crusade for Christ" fund. After declining, he received a letter from his son on a reputed cannibal island in the South Pacific. When the descendants of the cannibals gave hospitality and safety to the arriving troops of the allies, they found themselves safely welcomed because a Christian missionary had been on that island with the Gospel of Christ 60 years ago. When the father received the letter giving this incident, he sent the pastor a check for \$700.00 for the "Crusade for Christ" to help with missions. Truly, the missionary unwittingly sanctified himself for their sakes.

Each one of the five phases of the "Crusade for Christ" carries an equally challenging opportunity and obligation to sanctify ourselves for the sake of Christian reconstruction, rehabilitation, and relief; for a larger Evangelism; for an increasing enrollment in attendance in church schools; for a Christian World Order; and Christian Stewardship of all our life and of Christian money management.