

# Worthy

*...And when they had called in the apostles, they had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.*

Acts 5:40 -42

Do certain scriptures annoy you? Do you ever wonder, “Now what could they have been thinking when they wrote *that*”? Do you think, “How am I ever going to be like that”? Persecution and pain are not high on my list of “must-do’s”. Like Moses, I would rather someone else be blessed with this honor. Facing angry leaders for possible punishment seems a wee bit too masochistic for me. Yet, didn’t Jesus say the ones whom God blesses will suffer persecution for him (Matthew 5:10-12)? He calls on us to die in this temporary shelter so we can live forever. Jesus said, *Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor* (John 12:24-26). His call to abundant living is to a purpose higher than personal comfort—life which begets life (John 10:10).

My worthiness depends on my willingness to suffer dishonor for him. This is not about getting to heaven. It is about how God feels about what I do and who I am—whether he can use me to accomplish his purpose in this world. If I am worthy of God’s kingdom, I must suffer dishonor by egocentric, worldly-minded folk. Paul speaks of being branded for the Lord (Galatians 6:17). Do I listen to God, or do I listen to what other voices say? Do I seek his will? Do I work for him only when it is popular? Do I stop because the way became rocky and rough? Am I willing to be the kind of friend to God that I want he to be of me? Will my love last, or does it dribble out when life gets tough? Will his love prevail in my life? Will I allow it to carry me through the hard times? Will I be his instrument respondent to his touch?

I see the gap between where I am and where the disciples are. I would like to be where they are, but I am not certain I have the courage. Will I settle for a mediocre spiritual life, or will I seek the courage to take the Promised Land? Dare we become the kind of church willing to take a stand, willing to take abuse, willing to challenge the world for the sake of his name? Will we allow God to complete his purpose in us so he can draw the world to himself? More importantly, where does one begin to take on this kind of character—a mind and a church-culture dominated by Kingdom thinking? Does it not come down to whether God is worthy of my affection—not in part but in whole?

When Peter and John stand before the very group who manipulate Pilate to crucify Jesus, what is their response? *“...let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:10-12). Christ must become the “No-one-else” in our lives. My worth and well being come from him. He loves me more than anyone else can and more than I deserve, and he is worth the price I may pay to follow him all of the way to the end even if the end is my own.

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