

What Did I Sign Up For?

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Philippians 1:29-30 (NIV)

When a person signs up in the armed forces they only have a vague idea of the alternatives that might confront them. For example, I well remember a dear friend of mine describing his son's experiences in the Canadian armed service.

The young man signed up expecting some rough and difficult things if he was ever posted overseas. However, when he was shipped to one of the hottest countries in the east, he was not psychologically ready for what he had to endure while there.

The first negative thing that shocked him was the need to wear a uniform better suited for cooler climates than the frequent 110 degree daytime temperatures in that country. Then he was required to carry a 40 pound kit on his back when marching and on duty.

As might be expected he lost considerable weight, and found the experience very challenging. I suspect he sometimes wondered to himself, *"What did I sign up for?"*

In various places in the New Testament, people are warned that "signing up" to be a follower of Jesus can require enormous self denial. In fact, there can be so much self denial if a person follows Jesus that the act of walking with Jesus is like dying. This is why Jesus said, "If any person will follow me, let him/her take up their cross and follow Me."

A cross was an instrument designed to put people to death. Jesus used the word picture of crucifixion as the way to describe what happens when a person becomes His disciple.

Some well meaning people say that following Jesus will mean that you have an easy life of it. But what Jesus demands of His followers is that they be prepared to deny anything this life might offer by way of pleasures in order to honor and obey Him.

This is what Paul is getting at when he wrote our verses for today. The church at Philippi must recognize that God has appointed His people to suffering for the sake of Jesus. The suffering that was on the horizon in Paul's time was persecution for confessing faith in Jesus and

encouraging others to believe in Him as well.

As we read the history of the church, we read account after account of those who were tortured, imprisoned for years, and many finally murdered because of their strong faith in the risen Lord.

Ask yourself today, *"What did I sign up for?"*

Did you recognize the fact that when you became a follower of Jesus you were possibly in for a difficult time? Do you truly believe that Jesus is worth the loss of anything or everything this life offers? Do you really understand that when you received Christ it was given to you not only to believe on Him but to suffer for His sake?

May you find grace to die to yourself in order to live for Christ.

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