

My soul is among lions;
I must lie among those who breathe forth fire,
Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows
And their tongue a sharp sword.

Psalms 57:4

CARRYING THE COLORS



ON JULY 1, 1863, THE FIRST DAY OF the battle of Gettysburg, Lieutenant Colonel Rufus Dawes prepared to lead his valiant “Iron Brigade” against a line of Confederates that had taken cover in a railroad cut alongside Chambersburg Pike. Dawes’ men could not see the enemy, but they knew where they were, and to reach them they would have to charge across an open field for about 175 yards. Accompanied by the men of the 95th New York, led by Major Edward Pye, the Wisconsin 6th hurled themselves toward the Confederates at Dawes’ cry of, “Forward! Forward! Charge! Align on the Colors! Align on the Colors!”

The Union soldiers charged into the withering fire. Dawes himself wrote later that it was “murderous.” Men fell right and left, mowed down by the relentless Confederate musket and cannon fire. Repeatedly the “colors”—the flag of the United States—fell and

were picked up again as its bearers were, one after another, mowed down. There is no easier target for the sharpshooter than the soldier bearing the flag; he stands out in the smoke and disorder of battle, and is not even firing back. But both for morale and to keep the men organized it was critical that the colors remain aloft. At one point in the charge the regiment formed into a V shape, the colors at the point, leading the charge.

As one flag-bearer would fall, a nearby soldier would pick up the fallen staff and continue on. Again and again, in just a matter of minutes more than ten bearers would fall, but each time the torn and bloody flag would be picked up and held high. Knowing they would almost certainly be killed, each man in turn retrieved the banner of his nation, making the sacrifice to give his fellow infantrymen a clear guide to follow.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

1 Peter 4:12-14

The safest position for the Christian is anonymity. When one wears the drab apparel of the nondescript, the onlooker, one moves through life unchallenged, unscathed. When the

Christian gets along with everyone because he lets himself be identified with anyone, he collects few battle scars. When one's allegiance is unknown or unknowable one does not invite anger or rebuke.

Let one put on the uniform of faith, however, relinquishing his anonymity and declaring his allegiance, and soon the musket barrels will begin to take aim over the breastwork. When one puts on the cloak of

Christ in this world—when those of this world know that you belong to Jesus—it invites, at the least, their opinion, which is often unfavorable.

Friends once thought close drift silently away. Stranger and friend alike move uneasily, speak awkwardly in your company. New friends, new family are discovered, but some of those who once held you dear now hold you at a distance.

And you realize that there may be a price to pay for wearing the uniform of faith in Christ.

...but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

1 Peter 4:16

But when the common foot soldier picks up and raises the banner of his Savior, then the foes of Christ can take even easier aim. When one not only declares his side but puts himself forward as a leader, the Enemy musters his very best marksmen to bring him down.

Satan may be evil, but he is not stupid. In any battle the prize casualties are those of higher rank,

for when one takes out a private one has removed one weapon, but when one takes out a captain one has removed the leader and guide for *many* weapons. And when one takes out one so brave as to lead the charge by carrying the colors, one has, at least for a time, crippled morale and dimmed vision.

"But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues

and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony."

Luke 21:12-13

In adversity, however, there lies opportunity. In these times we experience more intimately the presence of Christ, the enabling power of the Spirit, the overwhelming resolve of the Father. And by these strengths we do not just gain victory over the foe of righteousness, but gain new troops for the battles to come.



Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:10

