

Chapter 30 | When You are Holding on for Dear Life

One day in the late Spring they came to his cell in the Mamertine Prison in Rome and opened the door. His executioners led him out of the city on the Ostian Road.

As they were walking out, other travelers would have been walking into Rome. They would have paid him little attention. No one would have recognized his face. No one would have known his crime. He was just another prisoner, just another “dead man walking.”

After traveling a few miles out, the executioners would have stopped. A block would be laid down. His head would be placed upon it. A sword would be raised. And in an instant the head of the most influential writer of all times would roll upon the ground.

Paul had known his share of suffering, but he did not shrink back from his calling. If we could look closer, we would see how scars spread across his back like a windshield crack and how wounds stiffened his joints. His own account of his hardships included floggings, lashings, beatings with rods, pelting with stones, shipwrecks, dangers from rivers and bandits and Jews and Gentiles, danger in the city and in the country, danger at sea and from false believers. He knew hard labor, lack of sleep, hunger, thirst, cold and nakedness (2 Cor. 11:23-29).

It's a wonder that he could move at all, but move he did. From Corinth to Ephesus, from Thessalonica to Colossae, he left his footprints all over the known world of his day. His visits to these cities were not for sightseeing. He worked. Long days of preaching and establishing churches.

When he wasn't walking he was writing. He wrote letters to the church in Rome and Corinth and Galatia and Ephesus. He wrote to Titus and he wrote to Timothy. Letters that continue to bless. God's grace turned his world upside down and his life was spent telling others about it. Until that day on the Ostian Road, when he drew his last breath.

When you face struggles because of your faith, remember Paul. He anchored himself to a purpose that was higher and greater than his life. There are many fights you can fight, but Paul trained himself for the “good fight” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

His fight did not end at death. His writings have encouraged, exhorted, and educated followers of Christ till today and for all the tomorrows to come. He gave himself totally to eternal things.

So can you. Fight the good fight. And like Paul, finish the race well.