**Why Not James?!?**

If there was an inner circle among the apostles of Jesus, it included Peter, James and John. Jesus chose them to accompany Him exclusively on several occasions. Of course, James and John were brothers and Peter and Andrew were brothers but, for some reason, Andrew wasn’t part of the group.

Acts 12 makes the matter-of-fact statement that Herod had James the brother of John put to death with the sword. The Scriptures make no mention whatever of John’s reaction to the execution of his brother. When Jesus first met James and John, they were of such temperament that Jesus gave them the nickname, “Sons of Thunder”. But the influence of Jesus on John was so profound that he became the apostle of love. It appears that this transformation had already taken place by the time James was killed.

The Jews were so pleased with Herod for killing James that he decided to do the same to another of Christ’s apostles. He arrested Peter, but because it was during the days of Unleavened Bread, he determined to keep him in prison and bring him out to the people after Passover. Herod never got the chance to do Peter harm. God intervened miraculously and rescued Peter from the prison.

I have often wondered how John felt about God rescuing Peter but not his brother James. I would never presume to know what was in the mind of John in the absence of revelation, but there are some Scriptural principles that are worthy of consideration as we, like John, try to make sense of the fates of these two righteous servants of Christ.

**We must desire that the Father’s will be done.** Jesus certainly manifested this attitude of heart under the most terrifying of circumstances. He pleaded that the Father spare Him the torture of the cross, but also prayed, “Your will be done”. God has promised to make all things work together for good to those who love Him, and only He knows what is best for His children. The only reasonable attitude for those of us who love God is complete trust. *John must have felt that way.*

**All the apostles were dead men walking.** They had already given their lives to the cause of Christ, whether in death or in life (Philippians 1:20). The occasion of death for each man was simply a matter of timing. James (not John’s brother) wrote that life is but a vapor that appears for a little time, then vanishes away (James 4:14). While the principle may be difficult to accept in human terms, it is true nonetheless: The difference between a life of 30 years and of 90 years is of little consequence in light of eternity. *John must have known that.*

**The survivors are the ones who suffer.** When John was old, he received a revelation from Christ. While in the Spirit, he heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them” (Revelation 14:13). John was grieved when James died, but *he could take comfort in the knowledge that his brother was with the Lord.*

When adversity comes our way and others seem to have escaped unscathed, we must focus on the brevity of life, the surety of eternal salvation and our confidence in the wisdom and power and love of God who will ensure that all things will work together for our good (Romans 8:28).

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