

Semper Fidelis

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free, " (John 8:31,32).

Back in 1950, the 1st Marine Division was cut off by some 300,000 Chinese Communists in Korea. When asked about retreat, General Walton Walker replied, "Retreat, hell! We're only attacking in a different direction!" For 14 days his men hacked their way through heavy gunfire, blizzards, and thousand-foot chasms. But would they have done that if General Walker had adopted a defeatist attitude? If he had played it safe and dug in, or surrendered?

In the tight spots of life, many people develop a "siege mentality," as though they expect defeat or a dull stalemate. The important thing in life is not necessarily being successful, but being faithful. "Semper Fidelis" - "Always Faithful." This is not only the motto of the United States Marine Corps, but it's also what our Lord Jesus impresses upon us as his followers when he says, *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples."*

Another beleaguered American had it right when he said, "Defeat doesn't finish a man ... Quitting does. A man is not finished when he is defeated. He is finished when he quits." A number of years ago Billy Graham was honored at a White House dinner and was given the Distinguished Service Award by the President and leaders of Congress. By that standard, however, the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah was a dismal failure, and the work of his life a complete washout. Jeremiah couldn't win, but he is the prophet who wouldn't quit. Twenty-six centuries later, his name is still remembered and those of his fellowmen are not.

Dr. Martin Luther wouldn't quit either. Even though he was faced by seemingly insurmountable odds, he bravely persevered for the truth of God's Word and the saving gospel of Jesus, as our Savior encourages all of his followers to do. In like manner, our calling is to *"fight the good fight of faith,"* to contend for the truth whether this is popular in our society or not. Whether we win or lose is not up to us, but to God.

In that same Marine engagement in Korea Colonel Lewis B. Puller reported: "The enemy is in front on us and behind us, to the left and to the right of us. And they won't escape this time!" Many veterans in the Lord's service will tell you that it's the hard times, not the good times, that knit our souls together. That's what our Lord Jesus meant too when he said, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,"* and then added, *"Rejoice and be glad ... for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you,"* (Matthew 5:10,12).

The Apostle Paul understood this and exclaimed, *"I want to know Christ ... and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings,"* (Philippians 3: 10). He believed that God can do with our sufferings what he did with Christ's, and in all of them make us *"more than conquerors,"* (Romans 8:37). That same indomitable spirit is ours in Christ Jesus.

Semper fidelis!

Blessed by the love of Jesus,

Pastor Terry