

(From the book of sermons, compiled and edited by Agnes Robinson, entitled *Heaven's Quest for a Man Like God* by Rev. H. P. Robinson, copyright 1969 by LifeSprings Resources, formerly Advocate Press. Reprinted by permission.)

THEY WERE EXPENDABLE

“Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment; They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword . . . (Of whom the world was not worthy) . . . And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:35-40).

With apologies to William Allen White, author and correspondent, I have chosen as a topic for this message the title of one of his famous books.

The book entitled “They Were Expendable” has for a background the world’s most bloody war. The characters involved were not fictitious. They were red-blooded American boys to whom fear was a stranger and for whom defeat could never come. They could not be defeated even though they were outnumbered a thousand to one. Their blood reddened the waves of the South Pacific, but their daring heroism as they fought and died has inscribed upon the pages of war history a new chapter that shall go unchallenged for generations yet to come.

No other title could be more fitting for that

book than “They Were Expendable,” for those men were expendable. They made themselves available to the cause of freedom. They did not fight for fame, honor and glory. They did not fight for a selfish purpose. They did not fight because they were forced to fight. (They had opportunity to save themselves, but would not.) They did not fight because they thought they would live to enjoy the spoils of a victory. They fought for a cause. A cause that was greater than they were. A cause that meant more to them than life. A cause that if lost, would make life not worth living.

The counterpart of these men’s service and sacrifice may be found in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. There is a striking similarity between the caliber of these characters, though thousands of years separate their generations. In both cases some fought and lived and others fought and died. But both knew the same victory, because they had an unconquerable will. To those who died in the conflict it was the victory of the vanquished, but a victory nevertheless. To them it was not the individual that counted but the cause for which they fought. If by the death of some the cause was made to march on, the purpose was achieved, and for those who died it was gain. It is only the men who live like that who can say with the aged apostle, “For me to die is gain.”

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews will reverberate with the shouts of conquest and conflict as long as time shall last and as long as men shall live. Those men and women have emblazoned their names across the sky with a pen dipped in blood, tears and sacrifice. They have marched across time with a conquering tread, leaving a heritage to an unworthy world that shall challenge the best in every generation.

Those of whom we speak belong to the past, but the pattern they set belongs to the ages. In concluding their biography the Apostle Paul refers to a balcony in the sky where sits the great cloud of witnesses, observing the pilgrim travelers of this our day who would in like manner attain to an eternal reward. He, in his masterful manner, appeals to all men everywhere to walk worthy of the pattern of unselfish devotion that alone will classify in the category of the expendable.

Men are being moved by the wrong motives, they are underestimating the value of the cause for which Jesus died. When the hour of Jesus' greatest temptation arrived and opportunity came to Him to avoid the cross, He with one grim and final decision cried out: "For this cause came I into the world." With all of the magnitude of His greatness and all of the fathomless resources of His attributes, He valued the cause beyond them all. He made a desperate effort to raise the cause above mere temporal things when He said, "If any man puts his hand to the plow and then looks back, he is not fit for the kingdom of God." And in elevating it above human ties and individual worth, He said, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Finally when making a comparison between the treasures of this earth Jesus exclaimed, "If a man gain the whole world, and then lose his own soul, it will profit him nothing."

It therefore goes without saying that the world is dying for somebody who will be expendable, somebody whom God can use to represent the cause to men who are in darkness. Men have long since ceased to move with deathless precision toward the goal with an eye single to God's glory. There is too much reservation being made

today. We attempt the task of putting the cause over with too much timidity and misgivings. We are too fearful of losing something. The church is going to seed for the need of such men as that great soul who, as he lay dying, exclaimed, "My only regret is that I have but one life to give for my fellow man."

In our own church we launch new programs with much discussion about its possible failure. When a new church is to be built, it is often built on the style of a dwelling house so that in the event it goes down, "It can be converted into a dwelling, and sold." That kind of faith will never put the cause of Jesus Christ over in this world. To make reservations when one attempts a task for God is an insult to Him, and a guarantee of failure. God is able to lead His people on to victory against unnumbered odds; all He needs is somebody who thinks more of the cause than he does of himself.