On September 13, 1567, four men surrendered their lives "For the testimony of Christ and for our conscience."

So wrote Christian Langedul to his wife just before he died.

Three other men were executed with him: Cornelis Claess, Matheus De Vick and Hans Symons.

The four men were brought to the "great market place" in front of the city hall in Antwerp, a city in present day Belgium.

The men were given the "medium" severity execution for their day. Beheading was the most merciful. Being burned alive at the stake the most severe.

These men were each tied to a post inside a hut likely made of straw and wood. They were first strangled. (Typically, the executioner tied each victim's neck to the post with a cord, then twisted the cord with a stick until asphyxiation ensued.)

The executioner then set fire to the hut and those "Four friends came to a blessed end, according to the Word of the Lord: 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved.'"

I suggest you dust off your Martyrs Mirror and read the entire account. (P. 704-714)

Three of the men wrote letters to their wives in the days leading up to their execution. These letters are preserved in the Martyrs Mirror and to read them is very affecting.

Reading the accounts and letters of the martyrs can do several things for us:
1. Their clear view into the next world strengthens our faith.
2. Their incredible grasp of the Scriptures motivates us to absorb the Word like they did.
3. We're reminded to praise God for the freedoms we enjoy.
4. We're reminded that persecution could visit us again.
5. We're called to pray for those thousands of believers around the world who are suffering and being harassed for their faith right now.

Cornelis the Shoemaker was one of the four men who died at the stake in Antwerp. Here are excerpts from a letter he wrote to his wife just before he died, 450 years ago today:

"Thus my dear wife, follow Christ and take up your cross with patience and joy and follow Him all the days of your life, for he had to suffer so much for our sakes to save us. Therefore, let us suffer for His sake, since it is our hour."

"Hence, let us be satisfied in Him and take our cross upon us with joyfulness and patience and wait with firm confidence for the promises which He has made us, and that we may be crowned upon Mount Zion, and adorned with palms and may follow the Lamb."

"Herewith I bid you adieu, my dear lamb, adieu till in eternity. Adieu and farewell to all that fear the Lord."

Here in America, we are facing tests that are perhaps much more of a threat to the true faith than the persecution of 450 years ago.

In a thousand subtle ways, God's people are being pressured to give up their faith in God and lose their love for Jesus. Acquiescence to the spirit of the age happens very gradually, almost imperceptibly.
Let us take courage from our four faithful friends of four hundred and fifty years ago, and let us Resist with all the Strength His Grace gives us!

How can we "Always be ready to give an answer to every man that asks a reason of the hope that is within us?" (1 Peter 3:15)

The next time someone asks you how you're doing, try this: Say, "He's crucified, buried, risen, ascended, interceding, returning, Hallelujah!, I'm banking my whole life on that, so I'm WONDERFUL!

Peace to all,
Ken Miller

Re: TODAY, FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO - September 13, 2017 ~ Ken Miller - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2017/9/24 11:33

Amen Ken I love reading things like this.

Re: TODAY, FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO - September 13, 2017 ~ Ken Miller - posted by rstellico (), on: 2017/9/24 15:15

Thanks for sharing. It was worth it. Good counsel.

Re: TODAY, FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO - September 13, 2017 ~ Ken Miller - posted by bearmaster (), on: 2017/9/25 08:28

I always marvel at the deep faith of our persecuted brethren in times past and times present. I believe it was Corrue Ten Boon who said you never know that Jesus is all you need until you discover that Jesus is all you have. Truly these four brothers had Jesus. Would that God would deepen my faith walk as these four brothers who had the simplicity and purity of devotion to Jesus. My Lord Jesus deepen my faith walk as that of our persecuted brothers and sisters.

Blaine

Re: - posted by bearmaster (), on: 2017/9/28 10:44

There is something about the fires of persecution that burns off the dross of excess baggage. Suddenly when everything is stripped away you are left with nothing but Jesus Himself. I believe our brother Ken Miller is apprehending Jesus in a deeper way than none of us could ever imagine being outside of a federal prison.

A little over two years ago 21 Coptic brothers were martyred on the shores of Libya. They were of Orthodox background. When they knelt in their orange jumpsuits to have their head sliced off by ISIS. Each of those brothers died with one name on their lips. Each of those brothers died with the name of Jesus Christ. In the midst of their sufferings all of their Orthodoxy was set aside. Each of those brothers had apprehended Jesus in a deeper way than they could have ever imagined. This is the same with our persecuted brothers and sisters in times past and times present. For the martyrs, the witnesses of Christ, have apprehended Christ in a way of radical simplicity and purity of devotion to Him.

God grant that he deliver me from the shallowness of my faith. And deepen my faith walk to that of my persecuted brethren that I may apprehend and lay hold of Jesus as they have.

Blaine

Re: - posted by bearmaster (), on: 2017/9/29 10:27

In reading about the four brothers that Ken Miller spoke of I am amazed at the faith of these precious saints. These brothers had an apprehension of Jesus that many of us would never experience. The simple, yet profound faith, of these precious brothers speaks volumes of their heart commitment to Jesus.

There's something about the fires of affliction that makes Jesus special to the one who is suffering. Such a person as these four saints encounter Jesus in a far more intimate and precious way. They are willing to pay the price for intimacy that many of us would not pay. For the few who will take up their cross for the sake of Christ consider Jesus to be far more worthy to suffer for. Indeed such few will renounce the things of the world. They will consider the things of the world to be rubbish for the surpassing value of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ.

To read the testimony of these four brothers. To read their letters to their wives and children and friends. To see the tenderness of their heart and the comfort they offer for their brethren speaks of an apprehension of Jesus in a deep way.
The Word that flows out of the hearts of these martyrs as rivers of Living Waters testifies of the Incarnated Christ that lives in them. As I read the account of these precious saints I am convicted of my own shallow faith in Christ.

There is a fragrance in reading about the martyrs in times past and times present. Whether we read of the martyrs in Martyrs Mirror or Foxes book of Martyrs. Whether we read of the modern martyrs such as Jim Elliot or Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Whether we read of the sufferings of John Bunyan or Richard Wurmbrand. There is a fragrance of Christ that comes from such writings.

I am reminded of the account in scripture where Mary broke the vial of perfume to anoint Jesus. And Mark's account said the fragrance of the perfume filled the whole room. But for the fragrance to fill the room the vial had to be broken.

We see in the testimony of the martyrs down through the ages. Their brokenness has brought forth the fragrance of Christ.

Dear God grant that I may be broken to manifest that sweet aroma of the knowledge of Jesus in every place.

Blaine