



Devotional Thoughts :: Chocolate or Tungsten Soldiers?

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"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross..." (Hebrews 12:2 NIV).

The story is told of the little boy who loved to play with toy soldiers. His mother and father gave him a chocolate soldier, carefully wrapped in bright red foil, for his birthday. The little boy was ecstatic. He took it outside on a very warm afternoon and placed "General Julius," as he named his new addition to the family of soldiers, right up front. He played with his little army for about an hour when his mother called him to come into the house to help her. While he was in the house, his precious little chocolate soldier melted into mush. He was not a strong leader anymore! From might to mush, at the mercy of a muggy and merciless heat! When the fires of temptation and affliction bear down, do we melt? Are we made of chocolate or tungsten? Tungsten is a rare and heavy metal whose melting point (3410 degrees centigrade) is higher than that of any other metal.

Are we chocolate or tungsten soldiers for Jesus Christ? Do we want to please our Commander or ourselves? Are we willing to take the cross directly from Jesus, or do we want to pad it with comforts, the best of health, and always doing things our way? Do we want to always walk in the Garden of Eden and never kneel with our Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane? Are we willing to eat the bitter herbs before we eat of the fruit of the tree of life? Do we take flight if we see blood or tears on the cross? Are we willing to wipe from our hearts with God's grace all traces of revenge and lust and bitterness and flattery so that we may carry the cross with God's weights and not our own?

We can't cheat, either, by injecting the steroids of artificial happiness that give a temporary lift, but then attack later to finally destroy us. Happiness is deceptive and it is based on feeling. It is joy that we seek, and sometimes joy is rooted in sorrow. E. Stanley Jones said, "Anyone can have joy on account of, but Jesus had joy in spite of." "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross..." (Hebrews 12:2). Whatever humiliation and suffering there is, it is well worth the effort, for it is outweighed by the prospects of future real happiness of eternity with Him who died for us.

The Bible is replete with examples of both tungsten and chocolate soldiers and even people of God who were made up of both materials. The greatest Man of tungsten was Jesus: "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). Jesus knew what His mission was, and He determined to face the horror rather than run away. What a lesson for us when we are tempted to run a race in the opposite direction of our problems! Jesus also "fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will'" (Matthew 26:39). So tungsten men and women may pray for the cup to be removed but the test is accepting God's will, even if it is to drink the cup to the bitter dregs.

Another tungsten man was Joseph. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done..." (Genesis 50:20). Joseph, firstborn of the barren Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife, was the favored of the twelve sons. Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave. Later, when Potiphar placed Joseph in charge of his household, it was Joseph's very integrity that led to his imprisonment. That he was able to remain loyal and kind and sympathetic through all the injustices in his young life is quite remarkable. But what surely proved his mettle and metal was his forgiveness of his brothers' cruel act. Their intentional bane became Joseph's unintentional boon and Joseph was able to forgive them. God rules and overrules in lives. "So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them" (Genesis 50:21). What graciousness!