

SUPREME SACRIFICE

Harry Foster

IN a little church on the west coast of Ayrshire in Scotland there is a tablet in memory of a man who made the supreme sacrifice of his life in the carrying out of his daily duty.

He was a postman, and in the course of his work used to carry letters to outlying farms and hamlets, often in rough weather. It so happened one day that there was a fierce snowstorm, so heavy as to make it dangerous for anyone to try to get over the hills. On that very day there were two letters for a farm some miles away from his office. The postman got ready to set out on the perilous journey, but his family and friends tried to dissuade him from going. The postman, however, had a very strong sense of duty, and refused to allow the stormy weather to hinder him from the delivery of his mail. So with a cheery word to his friends, he set off to battle his way through the blinding snow, carrying the letters in his leather bag.

He was never again seen alive. Some days afterwards his body was found in a frozen state, and all knew that he had died trying to fight his way through the snow with his letters. His friends and family were so impressed with his heroism that they subscribed to have erected in the local church a memorial stone which could record his act of supreme sacrifice in the fulfillment of duty.

But there is a sad side to the story. When they opened the bag and removed the two letters which had cost him his life, they found that the envelopes only contained bills which could easily have waited. The postman did not know this, of course; he had been inspired by the fact that there was a message to be taken and at all costs he must take it. In the event there was no message and his was a wasted sacrifice.

The gospel is the story of how the Son of God came down from heaven with a message, and how He laid down His life in order to bring that message to us. But His was no wasted sacrifice. He did not bring demands upon us or reminders of our debts to God; He brought the good news of God's loving gift of eternal life. So His

memorial is not a stone tablet to a wasted sacrifice but the living testimony of those who have received His message and have found eternal life through His death. Each one of them can say: "He loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Can you say this?

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