Dear Open Door Family,

After I returned from an amazing trip serving with our Missionaries in Mexico, Carol and I packed and travelled to the memorial service for her nephew Jeremiah Small. (If you have not heard about his death serving Christ in Iraq, here is a link to a great article about him. http://www.worldmag.com/articles/19280) After talking with family who had just returned from Iraq as well as being at the memorial service it is still hard to communicate what powerful impact this 30 yr. old young man had and is having on the people of Kurdish Iraq. We may never know why Jeremiah was killed since the young man who shot him took his own life. But we do know that nothing catches God by surprise, He is sovereign and that He knows what He is doing. Jeremiah's mother and father came back to US and shared with us that it was very evident from everything that had been going on that Jeremiah's work in Iraq was finished and that he would continue to serve his Lord through his death. His family was part of the ongoing demonstration of the Gospel Truth. Over and over they were asked: will you seek revenge? will you seek financial compensation? Time after time they answered NO, we are NOT here to seek either REVENGE or Compensation. We are here to extend Forgiveness to the young man who shot Jeremiah and to his family. They were able to place flowers on the tomb of the student who shot their son and embrace the parents of the student assuring them of their forgiveness. In a culture that always seeks revenge it was a powerful demonstration of the grace of God. For the people of Iraq to hear the parents of a murdered teacher offering words of unconditional Forgiveness was unheard of. Jeremiah loved his students and adopted country - he knew it was a dangerous place to publicly live out his Christian faith but that is what God called him to do. So he did it. I was reading in Philippians this week with many of these thoughts running through my mind.

Philippians 1:21 (NIV) For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:21 (NLT) For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better.

Philippians 1:27 (HCS) ...Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...

Philippians 1:27 (NLT) Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ...

In light of Jeremiah's willing sacrifice of himself for the people he served, these verses offered up a new challenge for me. To LIVE, truly live as a committed follower of Christ means I must count the cost and be willing to pay the price, willing to offer up myself for the Lord Jesus. I may never be put in a situation like Jeremiah - my living for Christ may mean dying a little each day to myself and to the pleasures of this world. Being willing to spend myself for the good of others and the gospel. It will certainly mean to do what Jeremiah did by living in a way that is WORTHY of the gospel of Christ. What does it mean to live worthy of the salvation that was bought through the cross of Christ? It will mean thinking and speaking and acting in ways that bring honor to the Lord who gave His life for us. That is what Jeremiah did - he lived in a way that showed everyone what it meant to be a Christian. There was no mistaking his loyalty and commitment - it was to Jesus Christ. He was not there because he was paid well; he was not there because he was an adventure seeker. He was not there because he was forced to be there. He was there because he wanted to show the reality of living everyday for Jesus Christ. Thank you, Jeremiah, for your example.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, help me to live FOR YOU. To live Worthy of the gospel, of Your death for me. Help me to willingly die to self everyday. Help me Lord God, to live in a way that these things are TRUE of me in practical everyday ways.

Pastor Mark Kieft

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