



guidelines for living

a 5 minute message

November 14, 2017

WHAT ARE YOU LIVING FOR?

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:20

He left his heart in Africa, but his body is interred with the great in Westminster Abbey in London. At his death, natives gently removed his heart and buried it in the Africa he so loved. Then his body was carried to the coast where it was shipped back to England for burial. His name: David Livingstone, born in Blantyre, a mill town in Scotland where he grew up.

When I was in my early 20s, I had the privilege of visiting the birthplace of this great missionary doctor and explorer. The small flat where he grew up is now a museum, and on display there are artifacts and memorabilia from his years in Africa. What I shall never forget is reading the open page of his diary where in a firm hand he wrote of the devastating loneliness and pain he experienced following the death of his wife, Mary. Though the page was beginning to yellow with age, it was not the clarity of the text which caused my eyes to fill with tears. It was the message. "Oh, my Mary," he wrote, "how often we wished for a quiet home since we were cast adrift at Koloburg, and now you have gone to a better home, our home in heaven."

What sustains men and women who leave behind family and comfort to go to another country for the Gospel's sake, as did Livingstone?

Livingstone, himself, answered that question. After 16 years of service in Africa, he returned to Scotland and was asked to speak at the University of Glasgow. One of his arms had been rendered useless, the result of a lion's attack. His body bore physical evidence of the suffering which he had endured with 27 bouts of jungle fever. His face, a leathery brown from the result of exposure to the elements, was creased from the cares of a hard life, battling both the Turks and the slave traders, both of whom had little use for Livingstone.

A hush crept over the students who listened to this man, realizing this was no ordinary person. "Shall I tell you what sustained me amidst the trials and hardships and loneliness of my exiled life?" he asked, and then he gave them the answer. "It was a



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promise, the promise of a gentleman of the most sacred honor; it was this promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

At Livingstone's death, beside his body which was bent in prayer as he knelt by his bed, a small, well-worn New Testament was found opened to Matthew 28, and in the margin beside verse 20, was this notation: "The Word of a Gentleman."

Did Livingstone feel, though, that he had made a great sacrifice? Not in the least. He answered that very issue, saying, "People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much time in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paying back a small part of a great debt owed to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own best reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word in such a view and with such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say, rather, it is a privilege."

As the body of Livingstone was carried through the streets of London on its way to its final resting place in Westminster Abbey, one man wept openly. A friend gently consoled him, asking if he had known Livingstone personally. "I weep not for Livingstone but for myself," he said, adding, "he lived and died for something, but I have lived for nothing."

Resource reading: Hebrews 13:1-6