

“How Long Before I Die?”

by Dwayne Laws

He was five years old, complete with red hair and freckles. His smudged baseball cap was worn with pride, mismatched with a football jersey and tennis shoes. One could only imagine the radiance of his smile. On this day, his little jaw was firmly set with calculated determination. His eyes were moist, glistening with fear. He was lying silently and motionless on a hard, paper-covered examining table in a hospital. A long needle protruded from his vein, and he watched as his blood flowed through the tubing from his arm into the sterile collection bag.

Earlier that afternoon, his three-year old sister had fallen and suffered a ruptured spleen. She was already in surgery. The problem was that she had a rare blood type, and it seemed there was no blood to be found on this particular afternoon. Lab technicians were frantically scurrying about, making innumerable phone calls and whispering nervously among themselves. Finally they decided to take blood from this little fellow, who had the same blood type, and give it to his sister.

His mother tried, as best she could, to explain the situation in five-year-old terms. Her conversation was filled with, “Be a little man!” and “You must share your blood with Sister!” and “It won’t hurt much; just a little.”

Scared to death, he agreed to do it. Jaw set and lips sealed, he allowed the nurse to insert the needle into his tiny little vein. Eyes moist, he refused to cry aloud. The deed was done. The blood was flowing. The silence was deafening. That’s when he turned and asked his mother, “How long will it be before I die?”

That precious child! His innocent mind had concluded that, since his sister needed his blood, he was giving his blood to her and he was going to die. And he was willing to do it! That story tugs at my heart.

Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” Jesus had no need to ask, “How long before I die?” And He was willing to do it, so that we might live. While giving some final words of instruction to His own, He repeatedly insisted, “My command is this: **love each other as I have loved you.**”

How can we do it? *“I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

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EDITOR’S NOTE: The above story was published back in 1991 and I remember being very touched when I read it. In fact I had a lump in my throat at the time. I wondered both then and now if the story were actually true or if it simply illustrated the idea of “**sacrifice.**” Either way, it makes a powerful point. And I can imagine some young lad misunderstanding the sacrifice he was making. But one thing I know for sure — we do tend to take for granted *the tremendous price* Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made for **US!** He knew full well what He was doing. He sacrificially gave up His life for us, and He suffered excruciatingly on the cross as the perfect example for all mankind. I hope this story does two things: (1) Makes you think about the meaning of “**sacrifice**” and what sacrifice you are making for Jesus; and (2) Causes you to stop and thank God for His sacrifice for you! **AWG**

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