

*For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."*

**Acts 21:13**

## Store In My Heart

**Acts 11:25-26**

And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Barnabas and Saul did not set themselves apart from the rest of the brethren in that city. They met and worked together as a church should. We need to work with the brethren in whatever location we may find ourselves. This group continued to fellowship with Barnabas and Saul when they were 'set apart' to carry the Word to the Gentiles throughout the World.

This work seems to have lead not only to many hearing the Word, but also a label, or name, for those who were following Christ. They were called Christians because they followed the teachings of Christ.



# Worth Dying For

## Matthew W. Bassford

Among my many friends in Texas is a brother named Jerry Strode. We've known and worshiped with each other for years, but recently, a shared experience has drawn us much closer. Both of us have had to accept the fact of our own deaths.

Jerry's realization came a few years back when he developed a horrendous case of pulmonary fibrosis. In the space of about a month, he went from normal lung function to being unable to breathe on his own. He spent 22 weeks on oxygen, and part of that time, he was on a vent. His life was only saved by a last-minute double lung transplant.

To this day, Jerry's health remains fragile. He is on immunosuppressive drugs so that his body does not reject his new lungs, but he knows that someday, that rejection will happen. When it does, it will be the end for him.

The first Wednesday of my Texas odyssey, Jerry and I spent a couple of very meaningful hours talking with one another. Both of us see the world very differently now, and it was fascinating to explore together the lessons that we have learned.

The next day, I tested positive for COVID. Just about my first thought was, "Oh, no! I've killed Jerry!" After all, COVID does a number on immunocompromised people. When I was laid up, I prayed more about his health than about anything else.

## Contact Us

We want opportunities to speak with others about the Lord's Kingdom.

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## For Our Information

Adene Gray is doing better and getting around a little easier following physical therapy.

The Simpson Family is in Conway today. Gracie will worship at the Hwy 65 congregation while she is at college.

Dan and JoBeth will be in Texas the end of this week for a visit with their kids.

Tonight we start with 1Kings 6:29.

Wednesday we will begin our study in 1Timothy.

Pray for safety, courage & healing.

Thankfully, he never developed symptoms, and when I was able to come back to church, he was one of the first people I saw. I greeted him and told him how glad I was that I hadn't killed him.

In response, he waved his hand dismissively. "Don't worry about it," he said. "I'm going to die anyway, and I can't think of a better reason to die than because I spent time with another Christian." He told me next that in his estimation, a life of isolation wasn't worth living.

The era of COVID has been an era of fear. From the beginning, various authorities have done their best to make us afraid so that we would follow the precautions that they thought were appropriate: masking, social distancing, vaccinating, isolating, and so forth. As a result, many have spent the past couple of years terrified of getting COVID. They think that getting COVID and dying is the worst fate, unimaginably bad, and they will do anything to avoid it.

Jerry knows death better than just about anybody who's still alive. He knows just how bad it is, and he knows that it's not the worst. Loneliness is worse. Cutting yourself off from the people you love is worse. Above all, not having a rock-solid relationship with Jesus is worse. In fact, says Jerry, that's the real worst.

None of the above means that we should not take precautions. Jerry had a mask on when I saw him that Sunday. Precautions aren't the problem. The problem is when we allow fear, whether of COVID or anything else, to separate us from the things that really are worth dying for.

(Since being diagnosed with ALS, Matt has written several times on themes and thoughts that we don't often consider. His situation as a talented writer in a situation where he sees difficulty and problems ahead with death almost in sight, coupled with a desire to help prepare others for the day of judgment, is giving us some insight in things we often refrain from talking about.

I think it is important that we consider such things as this article discusses. If our hope is in Jesus and eternity, why do we let things that are focused on living here get in the way of doing what God has commanded. Paul refused to let death keep him from doing God's will, Acts 21:13, we should also. DLH)



We seek only to serve God according to His Will!