

Abu-Seifein: Loyalty Perseveres

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"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." (II Timothy 4:7)

Loyalty to God means being true in word, faithful in deed, and free from betrayal. In Genesis, the first Holy Book of the Holy Bible, loyalty is given importance. "And you know that with all my might I have served your father" (Genesis 31:6).

The martyrs conquered the fears associated with persecution and always remained loyal to the Lord. They taught us that we must either conquer fear or be its slave. The Holy Bible confirms this ancient lesson again in the first of its Holy Books, Genesis. "I was afraid and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10). We must stand for what is right when in its ranks there are only a few. We must not be frightened to defend our faith, when the masses believe differently. Only the fearless are truly free in this earthly world.

What were the qualities of loyalty to God that abounded in the martyrs? Love, tolerance, optimism, temperance, industry, faith, and righteousness. They saw life as too precious and too short to waste upon anything other than their love for God. They made each and every day count glorifying His Holy Name. The martyrs believed that life was brief. "For we will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again" (II Samuel 14:14).

Loyalty to God meant dedication, devotion, and undivided service. This can be found in the beloved story of the triumphant soldier and martyr "Abu Seifein". Abu Seifein did not wish away his every difficulty but instead met his opposition on the battlefield of both war and persecution. He mastered his difficulties and in doing so, his faith became stronger in conflict. "You have armed me with strength for battle" (II Samuel 22:40).

Abu Seifein was born "Philopateer" in 224 AD in the city of Eskentos in Cappadocia to pagan parents. One day while hunting, a wild beast attacked his father and grandfather. The beast devoured the grandfather before Philopateer's father's eyes. Upon witnessing this grueling sight, Philopateer's father fainted. While unconscious his father had a startling vision. He saw the brightest of lights and heard a peaceful voice saying, "I am your God who loves you. I know that you have a good heart and that you hate the pagan idols. I want you to know that your son Philopateer will become like a tree bearing good fruits, and because of him, I will bless you and your wife. Your son Philopateer will be My witness and will defy all prejudice in My Name."

Inspired by this vision the entire family including young Philopateer was baptized. The pagan prince of Cappadocia upon learning of their baptism ordered the Christian family to be arrested and thrown to the wild beasts. The Lord intervened and the wild animals did not harm them. Astonished the prince freed the family.

Shortly thereafter, the Berbers attacked city of Eskentos and Mercurius' father joined the army to fight against them. He was taken prisoner during the battle and served the Berbers for seventeen months and was released. He died soon after returning home.

Needing a replacement for Mercurius' father in his army, the king, Dicius chose his only son. Mercurius not only replaced his father but also led the army against the Berbers. After several long and exhaustive days of fighting, Archangel Michael appeared to Mercurius bearing a shining sword. The Archangel said, "Mercurius, servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, do not be afraid. Take this sword from my hand and fight the Berbers with it. Do not forget the Lord your God when you return home in victory. I am Michael the Archangel, whom the Lord sent to inform you that you will suffer for the Lord's Name, but I will be with you and support you until you complete your testimony. The name of our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified in you."

With the sword given him by the Archangel Michael, he conquered the Berbers and felt Divine strength enter into his heart. This is why he is called "Abu Seifein", the saint with two swords, his own and one delivered unto him by the Archangel. The king was extremely pleased with the victory and appointed Abu Seifein "prince" and gave him many honors.

The earthly honors would prove to be short lived when Abu Seifein refused to pay tribute for the victory to the kings' false gods. The king outraged, questioned his disobedience and refusal to worship the idols. Abu Seifein answered with courage, "Your majesty, the victory was not due to idols wrought by human hands. It was accomplished through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He sent His Archangel, Michael to give me a sword and strengthen me. I cannot deny my God and worship statues."

When he could not be persuaded differently he was thrown in jail. While in prison Abu Seifein suffered many cruel and painful tortures, yet he was firm in his refusal to worship false gods. When his flesh became torn with persecutions the Archangel Michael wings would touch his punctured wounds and heal them.

With Archangel Michael's healing of every torture, the cruel king decided to behead Abu Seifein. With the news of his approaching final torture, Abu Seifein lifted up his arms and prayed fervently to the Lord. With his prayers, the Lord Himself appeared to this saint in a vision surrounded by many heavenly angels. The Lord spoke to Abu Seifein saying, "My chosen son, Mercurius, come to your Eternal Rest with the saints. Your prayers have risen up to me like the aroma of good fragrant incense. Miracles will be performed in churches bearing your name. And I will save those who ask Me through your intercession. Whoever writes or reads your biography will have their names written in the Book of Life."

Following this blessing, Abu Seifein did not delay in appearing before the executioners. He knelt before them and said, "Lord do not count this sin against them." Abu Seifein was martyred for his undying loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ on the fourth of December in 250 AD. He was but 25 years old.

May Abu Seifein's great love and loyalty for the Lord abide in us all.

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