

Lieutenant Terry Waters GC and Mark 15:31

Introduction

April 2011 marked the 60th Anniversary of the battle of the Imjin River¹ fought during the Korean War, a war that has never officially ended². Only an armistice was declared in 1953. Nevertheless, despite the great cost of the war, Allied efforts achieved one lasting success. At least 11 Bible Baptist churches exist in South Korea³. None exist, or can exist at present in North Korea, where Christians are systematically persecuted⁴.

One individual contribution to the Allied success occurred after the battle of the Imjin River that is notable in that it illustrates Mark 15:31. ***“Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.”***

The late General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, former Commander-in-Chief of Allied Forces Northern Europe in NATO, described what happened⁵.

“The Caves”

As Captain Farrar-Hockley, General Sir Anthony was adjutant of the 1st Battalion, the Gloucestershire Regiment and went into Communist captivity with the survivors of his battalion when they were forced to surrender after four days of heavy fighting at the battle of the Imjin River, April 22nd-25th 1951. General Sir Anthony wrote:

“Part of the unworked coal-mining settlement of Kang-dong [was] known formerly by prisoners as “The Caves.” In 1950 and until the summer of 1951, many United Nations prisoners had been crowded into old tunnels in the hillsides round about, often drenched by the water that ran in from underground streams. The numbers of men who died in these black holes in the ground will never be known exactly. In cross-checking to find our friends, we accounted for over two hundred and fifty deaths; but this is not the total figure.

“Of all the many stories of gallantry and selflessness on the part of prisoners in these caves, I will recount only one here: a story that was told to us later by men who had formed part of it; a story which provided us with inspiration to continue resistance to our captors during the most difficult moments. Terry - the last remaining platoon commander of “A” Company - was taken to “The Caves” in the summer of 1951. He had been a member of a column of seriously wounded captives which had marched slowly north from the Imjin River some little time after the two main columns had set off. Though he was in great pain from a wound in his leg and a terrible head injury, Terry set a splendid example on the march, caring, as best he could, for other serious casualties with him. By the time they reached “The Caves,” the condition of many prisoners had deteriorated dangerously; for they had had no medical attention of any sort en route and many still wore the dressings, by now ragged and filthy, placed on their wounds by our own medical staffs before capture.

“Terry, and Sergeant Hoper of the Machine-gun Platoon, were placed with a number of others from the column in a cave already crowded with Koreans - themselves dying of starvation and disease. Except when their two daily meals of boiled maize were handed through the opening, they sat in almost total darkness. A subterranean stream ran through the cave to add to their discomfort, and, in these conditions, it was often difficult to distinguish the dead from the dying.

“One day, a North Korean colonel visited them to put forward a proposition.

““We realize,” he said, “that your conditions here are uncomfortable. We sympathize. I, myself, am powerless to help you - unless you are prepared to help us. If you care to join the Peace Movement to fight American Aggression in Korea, we can take you to a proper camp where, in addition to better rations and improved accommodation, your wounds will be cared for by a surgeon.”

“Our men refused this offer, individually. But Terry, seeing their condition, their numbers dwindling, came to a decision on which he acted the next morning. He drew Sergeant Hoper to one side and said:

“I have thought this business over and have decided that you must go over to the ‘Peace-Fighters’ Camp. Most of you will die if you stay here. Go over, do as little as you can; and remember always that you are British soldiers.”

“What about you, sir?” asked Hoper.

“It is different for me,” said Terry. “I am an officer; I cannot go. But I order you to go and take our men with you.”

“Terry remained firm in his decision; and when the North Korean colonel returned, as they had guessed he would, Sergeant Hoper and his party left “The Caves” with a group of American soldiers. The colonel pressed Terry to accompany them, advising him that he would not accept a final refusal just then but would return later.

“He returned four times. Armed with promises of an operation on Terry’s wounds by a surgeon, and a special diet of eggs, milk and meat in place of the boiled maize, he failed each time.

“Terry was a young subaltern, not long out of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Yet, irrespective of his service and youth, he saw clearly, an officer representing the British Commonwealth in enemy country: by his actions, the Commonwealth’s reputation would be judged. Quite simply, he was given a choice: life, and agreement to reject, at least outwardly, the principles for which he was fighting in Korea; or a steadfast adherence to those principles - and death. Coolly, loyally, like the gallant officer he was, Terry chose death. And so he died.”

Posthumous Award

Lieutenant Waters was posthumously awarded the George Cross, GC⁶. He died aged about 22. The enclosed photo and its caption⁷ are most revealing, this writer’s emphases:

Gloster lieutenants Phil Curtis (right) Terry Waters (left) after a church service in an abandoned temple behind the forward Gloster company position (A Co, “Castle Site”) at around midday on April 22nd 1951. Phil Curtis won the VC; Terry Waters, the GC.

Call to Follow

Lieutenant Waters GC took upon himself full responsibility for his men and maintained the honour of his king and realm. He was, in effect, also mocked by his captors but never yielded to them.

He therefore exemplifies both the experience of the Saviour in Mark 15:31 and the kind of man whom the Lord yet calls to follow Him.

“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” Luke 9:23.



References

¹ www.britains-smallwars.com/korea/lmjn.html

² www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/06/113_68240.html

³ www.biblebelievers.com/churches/churches_international.html

⁴ www.northkoreanchristians.com/index.html

⁵ *The Edge of the Sword*, Star, 1981, pp 199-201, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_Farrar-Hockley

⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terence_Edward_Waters

⁷ rgbw-association.org.uk/news2.htm