

Real Life Stories
James Nicolson's Commendation



One Sunday morning a brother in our assembly read a single verse, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). Having read it he told the following story of twenty three year old Flight Lieutenant James Nicolson.

On August 16th 1940, 23-year-old Flight Lieutenant James Nicolson with his crew took off to intercept and attack German bombers approaching Southampton where a large raid was building up. The invaders had been sighted and Nicolson's Hurricane fighter group dived towards the bombers. As Nicolson engaged a Me 110, he was unaware that Me 109 fighters were flying above the 110's. One of the 109's attacked and hit Nicolson's Hurricane with four cannon shells. One destroyed the plexiglass cockpit canopy subsequently damaging his left eye and temporarily blinding him with blood. The reserve fuel tank was also struck along with his left leg. The Hurricane was now ablaze with the instrument panel melting, his

hands blistering from the heat, and his trousers on fire. When about to abandon his aircraft owing to flames in the cockpit, he sighted an enemy fighter. He slid back into his burning cockpit and continued flying the Hurricane after the enemy. Closing in, Nicolson opened fire and although the enemy took evasive action to avoid the bullets, it was sent crashing into the sea.

Finally baling out of his stricken aircraft, Nicolson had sustained severe burns to his hands, parts of his face, his eyelid was torn and his foot badly wounded. His ordeal however, was not quite over. While descending towards the ground some Local Defense Volunteers, under orders, opened fire with rifles at what they believed to be enemy parachutists. Flight Lieutenant Nicolson, in great pain, landed alive with further wounds received from shotgun pellets. Having landed, his hands were so badly burnt that he was unable to release his parachute once he landed. He was rushed to The Royal Southampton Hospital where he made a full recovery. His bravery and disregard for his own life in defense of his country earned him the Victoria Cross.

Some time after being awarded the Victoria Cross, Flt Lt Nicolson was summoned to meet privately with the Prime Minister Winston Churchill to be congratulated. The pilot, only 23 years old, standing at attention, face disfigured by the gasoline fire, would be humbled to be in the very presences of the famous and important prime minister. At that meeting the young man knew the appreciation of the man who was leading the nation in darkest days. But Churchill's commendation made it all so worthwhile. It was a single act in the midst of war that left him marred but commended by the Supreme commander.

One day each of us will stand before the Lord, our Supreme Commander, and while we wonder, "What will He find commendable in me, I am not a big preacher, few even know I exist," yet by our taking the abilities he has given to us we will stand glorified as He will look at us and say, "Well done good and faithful servant". It may be only one thing in a lifetime. Do we not think the thief on the cross will get a reward? It may be an action done in obscurity, like the ladies who assisted Paul, but He will not forget your labour of love and will commend the individual.

Then there are other times of duties performed and someone reminds of it, and having forgotten it, the light goes on.

Then there are matters that we done for the Lord Jesus that we cannot recall, "I just don't remember that!"

What will my response be as I look at Him, God's glorious Servant, and gaze on His hands and face? I cannot help but think it will be, "we have done that which was our **duty** to do" (Lk. 17:10).

By and by when I look on His face, beautiful face, Throne shadowed face
By and by when I look on His face, I'll wish I had given Him more.

More, so much more, more of my life than I ere gave before
By and by when I look on His face, I'll wish I had given Him more.