

Real Life Stories

Her Reward Was Jesus



Dr. Helen Roseveare lived a life of suffering, faith and purpose.

I noticed this last week that Dr. Helen Roseveare passed away on December 7, 2016. Because of her death, I could think of nothing more appropriate but call for people to become acquainted with this remarkable woman. We need examples of faithfulness, and hers is truly a story of a woman whose life became conformed to Christ. For those of you who listen to my colleague and friend Phil Callaway, you will remember Phil mentioning her on occasion. Phil remembers her as his mother and father dragged him to a missionary conference when he was young, and how she made a deep and lasting impact upon him.

She was captured by rebels who held her prisoner for five months.

Perhaps Dr. Roseveare is best known by the tragic fact that she was kidnapped, savagely beaten and raped twice. She was in the Congo as a medical missionary from England when the Congo declared its independence from Belgium. In the anger over white rule, she was captured by rebels who held her prisoner for five months and brutalized her. Her response to all of this was that it was not right to ask whether her sacrifice for the gospel was worth it. For her, the real question was whether Jesus was worth it.

Dr. Helen Roseveare was born in 1925. Her conversion experience included an encounter with Philippians 3:10. *“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share in His sufferings.”*

She ensured that all heard the gospel through the ministry of hospital chaplains.

She achieved her medical degree from Cambridge University. While studying there, she attended a missionary conference where God spoke to her and she committed her life to missions. She remembered declaring publicly that she would go anywhere God wanted her to go, at whatever the cost. And so it would come to be that when most missionaries had fled the Congo, she remained. Her suffering came at the hands of the rebel Simbas. She was eventually liberated by the national army of the Congo.

Even though Dr. Roseveare’s testimony to those who tormented her reflected the love and grace of Christ, what arrested my attention most about her was not the events of that brutal period. Prior to these events she had built a 100-bed hospital and maternity complex in which many thousands were treated, many of whom would have otherwise died. She oversaw the training of 100 young men and women trained in various medical fields, and ensured that all heard the gospel through the ministry of hospital chaplains.

Her accomplishments almost seem superhuman.

After the brutal events of the Revolution and after a time of healing in her native England, she returned once more. This time she established a 250-bed hospital that included a maternity complex and leprosy centre. She established a training college for paramedical workers throughout the country, as well as established many regional hospitals, a “doctor flying service”, and the list goes on and on. Her accomplishments almost seem superhuman.

But in the end, when the government started budgeting subsidies for students in hospitals and she was accused through wrongful slander of misdirecting subsidies; she then submitted her resignation. No one thanked her for her service as she left a lifetime of world changing ministry with dishonour.

Her reward was Jesus.

When she struggled with the injustice of it that not even a plaque had been put up in her honour, she came to an amazing conclusion. In her struggle, she said that she heard Jesus say to her, “Either it will be Jesus only, or you’ll have no Jesus.” She realized that all of these sufferings had come to her so that she might be content in Jesus only and not in fame, reputation or honour. Her reward was Jesus.

*... by Dr. John Neufeld
Gleaned from Back To The Bible*