

Hardships of the Journey

We just celebrated Memorial Day – a time when we “remember those who gave their lives for our freedom.” That is a phrase that is relatively easy to say until we realize the hardships endured along the way. I recently read a first-person description of the hardships suffered by soldiers during the Civil War. The following letter was published in a devotional book, Battlefields and Blessings, written by Lieutenant Nathaniel Mason Dudley to his mother. It describes the travels of his Regiment as they headed for the Battle of Second Bull Run (aka Second Manassas), in Virginia. The story caught my attention because my great-great-grandfather also fought in the same battles, after marching for hundreds of miles.

We left Winchester ... about 3 o'clock p.m. without dinner and marched until 4 o'clock the next morning over as rough a road as there is in Virginia. About 12 o'clock at night we came to the Shenandoah River ... and waded through. The ... rocks at the bottom cut my feet ... As soon as we had (climbed) the Shenandoah Mountains ... the troops laid down on each side of the road and slept until 6 o'clock a.m. When we were aroused ... we marched ... to Piedmont ... (where we) remained ... without much to eat and ... slept on the ground every night and one night it rained all night. We left Piedmont ... on top of the boxes (railroad box cars), as there were only 7 cars for our Regiment. It commenced raining shortly after we left and we had to take it all day long (until) we arrived at (Manassas) Junction ...



A second letter describes the physical health of Lt. Dudley's brigade: *Our Brigade marched about ten miles the first evening (out of Williamsburg) and camped for the night. I had command of the company. Capt. King and Lt. Sparks are both marched in advance of the army sick. On the 2nd day I was quite sick myself from diarrhea and as it rained all day I got very wet and had a chill..¹*

Lt. Dudley suffered a head wound at 2nd Manassas and died from those wounds on September 28, 1862, the first day of the 3-day battle.

The life of serving in the military presents many hardships, as described by Lt. Dudley during the Civil War. When we read the personal accounts of soldiers, it helps us appreciate what they went through for the cause of freedom.

Jesus never promised us an easy path when we follow Him. In fact, He warns us that the path will be difficult, but He assures us that He will be with us.. (Read Matthew 28:20). Just as Jesus endured hardships, we will, too, as we seek to follow Him. Eternal life in Heaven makes it all worth it. As a “veteran” of life here on earth, you and I have the opportunity to bring others with us to a heavenly destination. *They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said (Acts 14:21-22).*

Jesus said: *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Question: What hardships are you facing on your journey through life? Let Jesus help you through those difficult times.

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord. Life is full of hardships, and we know You are by our side through it all. Entering Heaven for eternity makes it all worth it. Amen.

¹ Battlefields & Blessings, by Terry Tuley, page 159