

TAMEONTA

Special Edition - In Loving Memory of Craig Martin Tessier

A Memorial Message

By Mark Walker

"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death." (1 Cor. 15:20-26 ESV)

Family's Obituary - "Craig Martin Tessier of Smallwood, New York, died on Sunday, February 22, 2015 in a Hospice at Canon City, Colorado of Lou Gehrig's Disease. He died in his beloved Colorado Rockies where he spent his last years. He created landscape gardens in Colorado and New York, hiked the entire Appalachian Trail one summer, and loved the outdoors. He was very religious and in the last seven years found peace and solace in his faith. He knew death was coming and faced it with grace and faith in his Savior. He was born on July 11, 1959 in Smithtown, Long Island, NY. He is survived by his mother Charlotte Tessier, his brothers Robert, Joseph, and Gary, his four nephews Robert, Oliver, Martin, and David, and an uncle, aunts, and cousins."



Photo of Craig Martin Tessier provided by his family.

Contents

A Memorial Message.....1

Our Loss Is Heaven's Gain..7

Light of Messiah in You.....8

Letters from the Church.....8

This article is adapted from the message I shared at the memorial service held by The Cell Church for Craig Martin Tessier on Saturday, March 21, 2015. Since Craig told us that he went by his middle name among the brethren, I will refer to him in this article as Martin. I have tried to share as much as possible in Martin's own words from his letters to our ministry, beginning with his testimony.

"I really was out there in the wilderness for 40 years,

running around like a madman. Looking back I really question my past sanity now, as the Lord has restored me so much over the past 6 1/2 years. I lived in New York, New Jersey, Oregon, Colorado & Montana, and I often took off into the woods for long periods of time, or traveled without funds or sane goals - just blowing in the wind. I lived in bondage, and I kept trying to break it, but I was too stubborn to try any help from outside myself. I claimed I believed in God and knew of God, and the reality is He kept trying to reach me all those years... Finally I became completely broken and contrite. I finally said, 'This is it, I don't want to go on anymore without knowing You.' I did not know what to do. I could not go backwards and change my past. All I wanted was to get to know Him and serve Him in some way. From that day forward He never left me. I had the most precious thing I ever had in my whole life - a real relationship with our Father - and I felt alive for the first time in my life."

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- Martin**

Martin also shared the story with us about why he chose to go by his middle name: "I must let you know that I do go by my middle name amongst the brotherhood - Martin... I had a grandfather I never knew, as he moved to Japan before I was born, and died before I could meet him. Yet he left all the boys of my mother each a card with a message on the back... On the front of the card was an older saint walking hand in hand with a boy, and they both had halos. On the back it read, 'Martin Craig, how's that red hair coming along my boy? Leighton Brown.' One day after hiking the Appalachian Trail and returning home to New York at age 33, I told my mother about my belief in God. She said, 'Maybe it's time for you to have this,' and gave me the card. I carried the card for many, many years, occasionally looking at it as something I desired. I carried it with me on my last runaway in a confused and crazy attempt to seek out what the card represented to me. I even had a campfire ceremony to receive the reversed name, 'Martin Craig.' Three years later I received real conversion by the power of the Holy Spirit and lost the card - left behind when I began my journey back here. However I did not miss the card because now I had the real thing."

"Yes," Martin wrote, "it was been the most wondrous and awesome gift anyone could ever receive - to experience a real relationship - a growing relationship - with our Father, Creator, Savior, King, High Priest, and its restoring effect over time. Here I am, only in my seventh year of new life, looking back as though I have been almost fully healed from a lifetime of extreme sinfulness and sickness... Yet when I look ahead with my hand in His and hear and see what He is telling me of what's up ahead, it's hard to fathom or comprehend its fullness. My deepest desire is to help others to see this also, to fully receive the truth of the promises both in this life and the next - eternal life."

It seems that everyone who got to know him found that the desire of Martin's heart was to teach the truths of the gospel of Jesus, to share with others what God was showing him. After Martin's death, his friend Bill Robertson wrote: "We knew he was going to a better place. I'm sad he's gone from my life because my life is smaller without him. But I know he has been released and I am better because I knew Martin. When I started walking with Martin I was not a Christian. Martin and I talked and walked in 2012, then he led me to Yahweh. Martin helped me come to terms with his future death. His big concern was that his insight on the word of Yahweh would not get out, because he was on fire for the Lord." I can also testify that this was Martin's great passion; in his last letter to us he wrote one page about his illness and his faith in God, followed by more than ten pages of teaching on Scripture, clearly handwritten with great physical difficulty. Since God gave Martin an unquenchable desire to teach His word, we will honor Martin's life and ministry by allowing him to teach us one more time. So let us consider one lesson we can learn from the way Martin lived, and one lesson from the way he faced death.

Martin's Life - One Who Made Peace

"A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." (Jam. 3:18 ESV)

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Matt. 5:8 ESV)

"One of the great characteristics of Martin's life in Christ was that he was a peacemaker. He had a heart for fostering reconciliation and unity among God's people."

One of the great characteristics of Martin's life in Christ was that he was a peacemaker. He had a heart for fostering reconciliation and unity among God's people. Martin described what happened when the Lord first began calling him to serve as more of a leader: "I began to step out a little as a leader of Bible studies and prayer circles. There were a couple of occasions where this placed me in a more difficult conflict/confrontation with others, but I worked through them and other conflicts that arose. I found that if I used what I was learning from the Lord's example it actually worked in these conflicts, and I was amazed."

One of the most striking things about Martin to me personally was the way he served as a mediator - a sort of bridge - between the Protestant Christian brethren and Messianic Jews. During my time in prison I found that Christian (myself included) and Messianic brothers, while they usually managed to get along fairly well, often interacted with one another primarily in the form of theological debate or disagreement. Martin was remarkable in that he considered himself to be a member of both groups; he described himself as agreeing with certain aspects of both Protestant and Messianic doctrine, and disagreeing with other aspects. As a result he managed to have communion and fellowship with brothers in both camps, and gathered around him a group of men with similar convictions and qualities.

The main reason Martin was able to successfully live out and encourage this sort of peaceful union was his firm conviction that, beyond the core essentials of the faith, disagreements about points of doctrine should not divide disciples of Christ. Martin, who was dedicated to continual learning about God's word, took a number of correspondence Bible study courses from both Messianic and Protestant perspectives. He once sent us a copy of a graded lesson from a Protestant course, on which the instructor had written a comment saying that although he disagreed with Martin on some points, they both loved and served the same Jesus. Next to the comment Martin had written two words: "A trophy!" He rejoiced in the fact that his instructor, in spite of their differences, had recognized their unity in Christ. For Martin, a passionate peacemaker, this was a victory. He always held the same attitude toward me, as we wrote back and forth about the Scripture and the Jesus we both loved and served. We were always able to share differing opinions with one another without anger, defensiveness, combativeness, or divisive attitudes. It was a true joy, and blessed and encouraged me greatly.

What was it that motivated Martin to pursue peace and unity so intently? I think it was, in part, his recognition that we are all works in progress - including him. Martin certainly had strong convictions about his understanding of Scripture, and loved to teach and persuade others of his point of view. But he did so while recognizing that it was always possible that he, rather than the brother who disagreed with him, was mistaken. Martin trusted the Holy Spirit of God to guide all of God's children into the truth, and he knew that one day - when we see our Lord face to face - we will all perfectly agree. As Martin wrote, "I learned to deal in love with everyone inside and outside the truth. Love is the bond of perfection and the unifying factor in our fellowship with Christ. He will bring every one of His true children to unity of understanding in His time. Until then we must do our best to follow Him and emanate His truth through our walk. To reach out to others as much as possible, planting seeds, watering, pruning as the Spirit guides us." In his last letter to us, he returned to this theme: "This approach also includes building bridges of common ground while setting boundaries as appropriate and considering others' offerings in prayer with His Holy Spirit. We will all stand in complete unity of understanding when we see Him face to face and we are like Him."

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So what can we learn from Martin's life as a bridge builder and peacemaker? He passionately and relentlessly pursued a right understanding of God and His word, but was willing to acknowledge that his understanding was imperfect. So he trusted the Spirit to teach others, as well as himself, and lived at peace with those who disagreed with him by resting in the knowledge that one day all

God's people will see Him as He is in perfect agreement and unity. Martin's life shows us how we can love the truth with humility, and love unity and fellowship with our brothers as well.

Martin's Death - One Who Was Faithful

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'" (Rev. 2:8-11 ESV)

The one thing that struck everyone who spent time with Martin in the last days of his life in this world was the way he faced death with unshakable faith in his Savior. His trust in Jesus in the face of suffering was an inspiration to those of us who had the privilege of knowing him. Even before he told us of his illness, Martin wrote to us of his trials in prison life: "All things are in His hands. Sometimes we may have to suffer under circumstances which just do not seem fair from our perspective. But little do we know the extent of the rewards which are ahead for His obedient and loving children." In his attitude Martin exalted the surpassing worth and joy of knowing Christ above all difficulty; in the days to come his disposition of heart would be severely tested, and would prove genuine.

**"Even in all these physical and mental struggles I am experiencing an outpouring in His spiritual realm that is filling my heart with such joy - these struggles pale by comparison!"
- Martin**

Martin first mentioned his condition to us in October of 2014, and in doing so revealed the power of his faith in his Savior: "Recently a wicked sickness spread out in this unit and I got it too. We all had variations in the symptoms and their effects. Seems like a stomach virus but it really made me sore and weak to the point of being shut down now for several days. Right now I am experiencing more muscular strain in writing this letter, as even small tasks like this are very difficult. So unless I heal over the next few days this journey may take a lot longer than normal. Yet even in all these physical and mental struggles I am experiencing an outpouring in His spiritual realm that is filling my heart with such joy - these struggles pale by comparison!"

Martin's unshakable trust in Jesus carried him through to the very end. His brother Bob, who was able to spend time with him at the end his life, wrote: "I was really honored to be at Craig's side in his last days. It was extraordinary the way he met death and how strong was his faith. He felt a loving and forgiving God welcoming him to heaven. He forgave his captors and accusers and found peace with himself. He faced death with a courage and faith in his redemption that moved everyone that came in contact with him at the end. He died a

prophet and a holy man." By God's unfailing grace, Martin conquered his incarceration and his illness - he was faithful until death, and we can be sure that he will receive the promised crown of life from the hand of his merciful Savior.

What can we learn from the way Martin faced death with such powerful faith? First, Martin remained faithful by focusing not on his circumstances or suffering, but on the supreme treasure of Jesus and His promises. "No matter what happens in this current world," Martin wrote, "our spirits soar with Him far above, and His promises far outweigh our trials now." Second, as he focused on Jesus his heart was filled with the glory and beauty of Christ, and Martin poured all his energy into sharing that treasure with others. In his last letter to our ministry it was clear that his passion to teach the truths of the gospel remained undiminished: "Our God is at work through all things for the good of those that love Him and are called according to His purpose. Though I cling to Him in prayer for healing and will never give up faith, hope, and trust, my approach is balanced by the fullness of Scripture built together into His big picture of light. So I follow in His footsteps too, with 'Let Thy will be done, not mine,' and I seek out all He is showing me and teaching me through this experience. I must tell you that now I am being filled to overflowing with His word of life, and am being transformed in His image in an incredible and very fulfilling way. So I am writing a lot of letters to everyone to give and serve as much as I can." At the end of his life, Martin's burning desire was to share with others what God was revealing of Himself.

Martin Tessier lived his life as a peacemaker who sought to unite all of God's people around the truth of God's work and the person of Jesus Christ. He died with remarkable faithfulness to his Lord and Savior, conquering prison, sickness, suffering, and the fear of death by fixing his eyes on the beauty of God and calling others to join him in that vision. Much like Jesus Himself dying at Calvary, to those who did not know Martin his death may have looked, from a distance, like one of weakness and defeat. But for those of us with eyes to see, God has made both Jesus, and through Him His servant Martin, victors over death and conquerors in glory. As he would be the first to tell us, all the things he taught - his love for peace and unity, his faithfulness in the face of death - really came not from Martin but from his Lord. The same glorious God, the same faithful Savior, and the same Spirit of power who defined and shaped Martin's life and death are also ours if we are united to Jesus. The grace to live and die to the glory of God is available to us all. As we seek to learn and draw inspiration from our brother, our ultimate goal is to look through Martin to see the beauty and majesty of the God he served. I know Martin would want it that way.



Writings by, and in memory of, Martin at The Cell Church memorial service.

In Memory of Craig Martin Tessier: Our Loss Is Heaven's Gain

By Ron Edgmon

While at Arrowhead Correctional Center Craig had a tremendous influence on me. I was the Unit Ambassador at the time he arrived at Arrowhead. As was customary, I made it a point to go visit the new arrivals and welcome them to the Community.

I noticed he didn't have a TV. But, he did have books and writing tablets all over the place. I asked him why he didn't have a TV. He said he really didn't want one. He was too busy reading, writing, and ministering before the Lord. He told me he really liked to write things that the Lord had laid on his heart. I thought to myself, "A good friendship could be developed here." And, as it turned out, over the months to follow a good friendship did develop.

Craig was a goal-setter. He took on a project one time to walk the yard for X amount of miles (I don't remember how many miles), and received several achievement awards and ribbons for meeting the required goal in the exercise program. We walked the yard together talking Bible and about all the things that could be done to minister before the Lord.

Every month the program at Arrowhead would have a musical concert put on by talented peer musicians. I had found the seat I wanted to sit in (not too close to the front and not too far in the back) to listen to the concert. Shortly, Craig came in and sat down next to me. We exchanged greetings, and the concert began. It was loud as usual, but I got into it with the tapping of my foot. I noticed Craig had taken out a piece of paper and was writing while the concert was in progress. He didn't appear to be interested in the concert. Later, I found out why. He was writing a poem for me.

"What a friend I have in Jesus, that He should treat me so kindly as to share one of His friends with me...Craig."

Upon leaving the concert he handed me the poem. I didn't read it until I got back to my room. It didn't take long before I was moved emotionally to tears. I had been praying, "Lord, what would you have me to do when I leave prison on parole?" The Lord used Craig to give me an encouraging answer in poem form. *"Ron: Let your light so shine before men, To glorify God as our Savior and Friend. Do the work His Word and Spirit give you, To offer the waters of life to whom it is due."* What a friend I have in Jesus, that He should treat me so kindly as to share one of His friends with me...Craig. I will miss him dearly. It is not goodbye, but as he says in his own words, *"for no matter where the Lord leads us our bondage is untied, And of one thing we are sure...I'll see you on the other side."*

Craig, here's to you; rest in the arms of Jesus, and I'll see you on the other side.

Your friend Ron.

Light of Messiah in You! For my good friend Ron Edgmon

By Craig Martin Tessier

Let your light so shine before men,
To glorify God as our Savior and Friend.
Do the work His Word and Spirit give you,
To offer the waters of life to whom it is due.

For the Lord your God is preparing the way,
To return for His Bride on our wedding day.
He will adorn you in garments of light for all to see,
That those still in darkness will be set free.

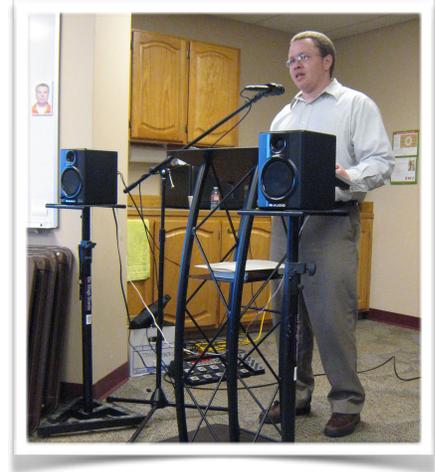
As the darkness gathers over all the earth,
His vessels of light will help to give birth,
For the gathering of His children unto His Kingdom of Glory.
Yet this end is only the beginning of His eternal story.

For we shall reign with Him a thousand years,
To bring healing to the earth and wipe away all tears.
Yet this battle will continue till the last page of the story,
When Satan is defeated before His Throne of Glory.

Then we shall see the New Heaven and Earth to be,
And we shall all live in joy in His Eternal City.
So, let us stand together in praise and worship.
This hope in our hearts is our unity of fellowship.

For no matter where the Lord leads us our bondage is untied
And of one thing we are sure...I'll see you on the other side.

*Peace be unto you my brother.
In the fellowship of Christ Jesus,
Your Friend, Craig Martin Tessier.*



Mark Walker sharing a memorial message about Martin.



Letters from the Church

"I'm writing because I felt led to share with others the glorious moments I was able to share with Craig "Martin" Tessier before he left this earth to go be with the Lord. I met Martin about three years ago, when we both happened to be walking the yard with a mutual friend of ours named Daniel. As we walked and talked, the subject of God and Jesus came up. I told him that I believe in God and

Jesus Christ, and have a desire to follow Christ's ways, but have developed somewhat of a hatred for many of the churches through the years. Even so, Martin was so caring and understanding, open and full of acceptance, that I signed up for the Messianic services he was attending. And the more we walked, the more he shared out of the Bible, and I grew.



Brothers and sisters gather to celebrate Martin's life at The Cell Church memorial service.

"Martin and I were blessed to get progressive moves to the same prison, where we proceeded to once again walk and talk in the yard daily, sometimes running. I grew closer to God, and my new brother began to tell me about his calling to Christ. He confided in me how it had felt wrong for him to stay in the Navy, so he walked away from it...literally walking all the way to the Oregon coast! Not long after his arrival, he was confronted by a group of mad, provincial, small-town young men looking for trouble. So he grabbed his backpack and faded into the coastal forest. He set up camp that night at a nearby beach, but then saw the

young men in a vehicle driving slowly, looking for him. While hanging on his every word, I asked, 'What did you do then?' He quickly went up the hill to a cliff area and discovered a cave where he would be safe. I told him how lucky he was, but he confessed out loud, 'I believe God sent me to that cave at His appointed time, for His glory.' I picked up the pace to a harder run, pondering his words as we ran for a short while in silence.

"He continued witnessing to me that, as he was in the cave, he watched the sun set on the ocean. As the sun touched the horizon, visually separating into two orbs, the top orb began floating toward him there in the cave. As it approached, it got brighter and more golden, turning into a cross - surely a sign from the Lord. I asked him, 'Martin, how did you know it was real?' He answered, 'I could feel the heat from it and see shadows created by the glowing cross. It was also reported in the papers that many others were able to witness a spectacular sunset.'

"Martin returned to the Navy, believing to give his life to God, but it was on his own terms. He had not yet become broken and contrite, humbled. Much like the Pharaoh in Ex. 10:16, his heart was still too hard and full of pride. I told Martin that he sure wasn't like that now. He responded, 'No, it took getting arrested and being placed in prison to become broken and contrite. It was then that I turned my life over to God's will.'"

- *William Robertson (edited by Daniel Mahaffey)*

"'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints' (Ps. 116:15). Brother Craig is a precious saint of the Lord Most High. He was a true beacon of hope to me. No matter what he felt like, he always spoke truth, life, and hope. His love for the brothers was pure and never faded. It hurt to see him in the condition he was in, and we prayed together many times. I asked our Father why. Our last

time together he and I got to pray one last time as he was packing out, and I knelt next to his bed. In my heart I had peace, knowing our Heavenly Father had His thoughts and ways that are not mine - His thoughts and ways are higher (Is. 55:8-11). "The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous are taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness" (Is. 57: 1, 2). His prayer life was anointed and the writings he wrote were inspired by the same. He often blessed the Body with a prophecy. "But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men" (1 Cor. 14:3). "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). This is who Brother Craig was, and he was an example to all of us of Christ's love. Even if it was not returned, my brother loved anyway, unconditionally. He is home now, with and among the great cloud of witnesses that look upon us and are cheering for us to run well, finish our race and stay the course. He's more alive than any of us can comprehend. "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die'" (John 11:25, 26). I love you, my brother Craig. It is not 'goodbye,' but 'we will see you later.' Thank you for your example and unshakable faith. Your walk blessed my life, brother. Shalom."

- *Love, your brother in Christ, Phillip Rodriguez*