

# **The Risk of Being a Disciple of Christ**

By: Mike Riley

On Saturday morning, February 1, 2003, as most of us were awakening, President George W. Bush spoke saddening words to the nation: "The Columbia's lost. There are no survivors." When a fiery accident destroyed NASA's oldest space shuttle moments before the scheduled end of its twenty-eighth voyage, seven people – five men, two women – lost their lives. As one observer noted, "They were just fifteen minutes from home."

## **A "Risky" Business**

Being an astronaut is a risky profession. Everyone who enters the space program knows and understands this fact. Astronauts recall the Apollo 1 test module fire that took the lives of three astronauts in January 1967, and the explosion of space shuttle Challenger in January 1986 that claimed its seven-member crew. Astronauts know the risks and they willingly accept them.

Virgil "Gus" Grissom, the second American in space and one of the three men killed in the Apollo fire, said, "If we die, we want people to accept it. We're in a risky business, and we hope that if anything happens to us it will not delay the program. The conquest of space is worth the risk of life."

## **Everything In Life Involves Risk**

It can be argued that everything in life involves risk. In terms of the danger to physical safety, some courses of action are riskier than others. Strapping oneself to a fuel tank containing one-half million gallons of liquid hydrogen and oxygen definitely qualifies. However, there are different kinds of risk. For example, becoming a Christian carries incredible risk!

The apostle Simon Peter knew this. Jesus told him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked

where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish" (John 21:18). With these words, Christ foretold the death of Peter would be called upon to die. A Christian preacher named Stephen learned the risk. When he delivered a sermon that angered enemies of the faith, Stephen was beaten to death with stones (Acts 7:57-60). James, the son of Zebedee, learned about risk: "Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword" (Acts 12:1-2). Certainly the apostle Paul knew the risks: beatings, imprisonments, stoning, scourging, shipwreck, and more (2 Corinthians 11:22-26). No one better appreciated the risks of obeying God than the Son of God Himself, who "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; cf. 1 Timothy 2:6).

## **Conclusion**

What "risks" might you face as a Christian? No one can say for certain. Jesus acknowledged that some would lose family relationships as a cost of being His disciples (Matthew 10:34-37). Would you accept that risk? Would you accept the risks that Peter, James, Stephen, Paul and countless others (Hebrews 11:35-38) accepted? Do you believe what Jesus offers is worth the price? Before you answer, know this. As great as the risk of following Jesus is, the risk of not following Him is infinitely greater - "everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46). Now ask yourself: are you willing to "risk" that?