

Showing Absolute Loyalty

Hiroo Onoda, the last Japanese Imperial soldier to emerge from hiding in the Philippine jungle in 1974, died at age 91 on Jan. 16, 2014.

He was an intelligence officer who was left behind and commanded to spy on American troops. He stole rice and bananas and shot cows that belonged to locals in order to survive.

During the war, Japanese were taught absolute loyalty to the nation and to the emperor. To the soldiers in the Imperial Army, death was preferable to surrender.

When sent to the Philippines, Onoda was ordered to do all he could to hamper enemy attacks on the island, including destroying the airstrip and the pier at the harbor. His orders also stated that under no circumstances was he to surrender or take his own life.

For 29 years after World War II, Onoda – who held the rank of second lieutenant – obeyed orders until one day his commanding officer, Maj. Yoshimi Taniguchi, flew to the Philippines to tell him that the war was over. Praised for his indomitable spirit, Hiroo Onoda returned home to a massive hero's welcome.



Onoda's story is an amazing one. There is, however, a spiritual lesson in it.

Before ascending to heaven, Jesus left us with the Word of God and the Great Commission: *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age* (Matthew 28:19-20 NKJV).

Like Onoda, we are to live as strangers in a strange land. The world may consider us to be crazy for our commitment to Christ, but we look forward to a homecoming and a reward that far outweighs the world's ridicule.

Shouldn't we be just as committed to our orders as Onoda was to his?

In His parable of the talents, Jesus concluded:

His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:23 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter