

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Are You Ready for Death? (Part 6)

I Samuel 20:3

We finished last month pondering *The First Stage* of death for the believer. We saw in II Corinthians 5:8 that Paul gives the comforting words “*present with the Lord.*” We often try to read comforting passages of Scripture to the family when a loved one has died. There are many to choose from, but I cannot think of any passage that provides more comfort than this one. Think of those words again- “*present with the Lord.*” I know that you will miss them, but remember that they are “*present with the Lord.*” You will not be able to hold their hand, ask counsel of them, or just talk about the day’s events. I know that you will miss all of these and more that I did not mention. But stop thinking about what you are missing and think about what they have gained. As a believer, your loved one is now “*present with the Lord.*” I know that I have mentioned this statement four times in this paragraph alone, and several times in the previous paragraph, but I cannot seem to fully grasp what it means. Just thinking or reading or hearing those four words bring indescribable joy and excitement to my mind. The dead believer is “*present with the Lord*” at the moment of their death.

When a loved one dies, we focus on our thoughts such as how close we were to them and how much we will miss them. I know that it is natural to do such, but as believers, we should go beyond our emotions and our feelings and focus upon the believer that has just died. Can you imagine what it feels like to close your eyes here on earth and open them in the presence of Christ? I think about it, but I cannot seem to fathom the full measure of being in the presence of Christ. Perhaps we focus too much on ourselves when a loved one dies. Maybe we should focus on what they are experiencing.

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The Bible does not describe in detail what it is like at the moment of death for a believer, so we can only speculate on what one experiences. I think there is untold joy and excitement at seeing Jesus, the Savior. He is the One that became flesh and died on the cross. He is the One that every believer has been wanting to see. At the moment of death, the believer closes his eyes on earth and opens them to see the Savior. What a wonderful time that will be! Someone wrote “It will be worth it all, When we see Jesus.” How wonderfully true that is! I do not know that we will think about the trials and troubles of this life, but if we do, they will not matter to the believer when they open their eyes in glory and see the wonderful face of Jesus. I know that you miss your mom, dad, husband, wife, son, daughter, friend, etc., but think what they are seeing—the face of Christ. In reality, we should not be sorrowing, we should be envying what they are enjoying.

As I write these words, I cannot help but think of what D. L. Moody said over a hundred years ago. As he was getting older and closer to death, he said, “One day you will read in the paper that D. L. Moody has died.” He continued, “Do not believe a word of it. I shall be more alive than I have ever been.” What a wonderful way to face death! That is how every believer should feel and what every believer should say. I do not know if Moody heard someone else say that or not. But it is wonderfully and absolutely true. A believer is more alive after death than they are before death. They are also happier after death than before. This world may be good in some ways, but it is no comparison to the place where Christ is. Dear friend, if your loved one has died, do not focus on what you are missing, but focus on what they have experienced—being “*present with the Lord.*”

There is another passage that describes how wonderful death is for the believer. I know that some will read this and think that this preacher is crazy, but when you have read what Paul wrote in II Corinthians 5 and Philippians 1 and thought about what it means, then you too will realize that death is not all that terrible for a

believer. After reading what Paul writes, turn to Luke 16 and see the terminology that Luke, led of the Holy Ghost, uses. The only conclusion that you can reach is that death is actually good for the believer. Perhaps you could even say that death should be desired by the believer. That seems strange to the flesh, but that is what Paul said in Philippians 1. See if the language in Luke 16 causes you to yearn to be with Christ.

In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus gave an actual account of one man that went to Heaven and one that went to Hell. We will consider the one that went to Hell later in the message. For now, our attention is upon Lazarus. Verse 22 says, *“And it came to pass, that the beggar (Lazarus) died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.”* You will notice that there is no intermediate state where Lazarus was taken. He was not taken to purgatory because there is no such place mentioned in Scripture. It is a place made up by the Roman Catholic church. You will not find it anywhere in Scripture. As we considered Paul’s writings, he never mentioned it either. When a believer dies, he is immediately with Christ.

Now what is “Abraham’s bosom”? Some have tried to say that it is a place separate from Heaven, but that is not true. According to history, the Jews used the term “Abraham’s bosom” to describe Heaven. It is not another place, but, rather another term for Heaven. It described a place of intimacy and friendship. Now why did they say “Abraham’s bosom”? Abraham was the father of the Jews. For any child, being with the father is a place of intimacy and friendship. It is also a place of protection and comfort. For the Jew, being with Abraham would be the best place to be. The Jews were just trying to describe how precious Heaven would be.

They connected it with the term “bosom.” In the culture of the Jews, they would recline when they ate. Often one would lay their head on the chest of another. We see that taking place in John 13:23 when John laid his head upon the chest of Jesus. It was a place of intimacy and friendship. That is how the Jews were picturing

Heaven—a place of intimacy and friendship. In our culture, we do not practice this as adults, but we can see it with children. A child will lay their head on the chest of their mother or father. It is as close to their parent as they can get. It is a place where no one can harm that child. It does not matter what they have endured throughout the day, they are close to mother or father, and everything is all right now. You can see relationship—Abraham, and closeness—bosom, in this Jewish term for Heaven.

Now do you understand what the Jews meant when they used this terminology for Heaven? It is a personal term. Heaven is not some abstract, far off place. It is a personal place. We will have a personal connection to Heaven because it is where our Father (God the Father), our Savior (God the Son), and our Comforter (God the Holy Ghost) will be. It is a place of intimacy and friendship. There have been some sweet times of service and fellowship here on this earth, but they pale in comparison to being in the actual presence of the great Triune God. Think about it—when a believer dies, he is actually where God is. That is what Paul was saying, and that is what the Jews meant when they used the term “Abraham’s bosom.” The dead saint is with God. There can be no better place!

Another word that I must bring out from this Luke 16 passage is found in verse 25. It is the word “comforted.” As you can imagine, it is a complete contrast to what the unbelieving rich man is experiencing. He is said to be in torment, but Lazarus is said to be comforted. Comforted means to encourage; to receive consolation. It is the verb form of the word used to describe the Holy Ghost in John 16:7. In that verse the Holy Ghost is called the Comforter. What we now have the privilege to experience because of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, will be known in its fulness when we get to Heaven. Here it is wonderful, but limited, because we still have this sinful flesh. But there the comfort, encouragement, and consolation will be experienced to its fulness.

There are troubles, trials, and difficulties that we, as believers,

go through in this life, but when we get to Heaven, they will not be around us anymore. There will be no troubles, trials, and difficulties when we are in the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They will all be in the past. Now do you see why Heaven is so wonderful? First, because God is there. Second, because all of the troubles of this life are completed. Why do we mourn for those who have gone? We cannot. They are far better off. We should rejoice that they have seen Christ and that their race and fight are over. There are no strifes to endure. All is bliss and wonder in the presence of Christ.

As we close this section of the message, let us determine that we will see death for what it really is for the believer—the passageway to see God. Let us determine that no matter how terrible death may seem for those who remain, it is something wonderful to the one who has died. I know that we are still in the flesh, and I know that it is hard to see a loved one die, but remember, they are in the presence of the Lord. They are comforted now. There are no more sorrows, no more troubles, no more disappointments. For a change, let us not focus on ourselves. Let us focus on how marvelous it is for them. We will continue next month.