

The Death of the Righteous

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"
Numbers 23:10

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Last Sunday we considered the glory of our Great Bridegroom the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Our earthly marriages are limited expressly to life, as in "till death do us part" (Rom 7:2).
 - 2. Our heavenly marriage is not hindered by death, but rather enhanced by its effects.
 - 3. Regardless of his abilities or love, an earthly husband is of no value in the day of death.
- B. Death is a certainty that no amount of rejection or precaution can eliminate or even defer.
 - 1. Solomon described it as a war in which there is no discharge (Ecclesiastes 8:8).
 - 2. Paul described it as an appointment which we all shall keep (Hebrews 9:27).
- C. The fear of death is a universal phenomenon that is grounded in guilt and superstition.
 - 1. The wicked have good cause to fear death for their judgment shall be of great terror.
 - 2. To make death tolerable there are many heresies that attempt to take away its awful sting.
 - a. Annihilation denies any existence after death, so why practice any self-denial?
 - b. Reincarnation proposes recycling as something else, so we get to die repeatedly.
 - c. Universalism claims that all men go to heaven and there is no literal hell.
 - 3. The fear of death is the meal ticket for religious hucksters and their heresies (Heb 2:15).
- D. One of the greatest gifts our Husband gave us is eternal life and deliverance from fear of death.
- E. How can David call death precious (Ps 116:15) and Solomon say there can be hope (Pr 14:32)?
- F. Where else can you hear the truth about death and the right preparations for it (Psalm 49)?
- H. Can we have the faith of martyrs regarding this event? They died cheerfully for their Husband.
- I. More could be written on this topic, and these points could be expanded upon, but this shall suffice.

II. DEATH

- A. Life was created in the beginning by God breathing life into Adam's earthy body (Genesis 2:7).
- B. Man has a physical body and a spirit/soul that occupies that body and gives it life (James 2:26).
 - 1. Paul spoke of the Lord preserving three parts of us: body, soul, and spirit (I Thess 5:23).
 - 2. Since we cannot clearly divide soul and spirit, we will leave it with the Word (Heb 4:12).
 - 3. The body cannot live without the spirit, but the spirit/soul can live without the body.
- C. Physical death is the departure or leaving of the soul/spirit from the body.
 - 1. Death is described as giving up the ghost – the soul/spirit within our bodies (Gen 25:8,17; 35:29; 49:33; Job 3:11; 10:18; 11:20; 14:10; Acts 5:5; 12:23).
 - 2. Rachel's soul left her body at death: it neither died nor disappeared (Genesis 35:16-20).
 - 3. Simeon was ready for his soul to depart his body after seeing Christ (Luke 2:29).
 - 4. Stephen commended his spirit into the hands of Christ when his body died (Act 7:54-60).
- D. When resurrection occurs, the soul must return to the body and animate it again (I Kgs 17:17-23).
- E. Paul described our death as leaving an earthly house to be with Christ (II Corinthians 5:1-9).
 - 1. He describes our physical bodies as earthly houses of this tabernacle that can dissolve.
 - 2. There awaits the righteous an eternal house (or body) built by God for our souls.
 - 3. The soul is naked and unclothed without a body, but God will clothe it again.
 - 4. Paul speaks of his soul being at home in the body but absent from Jesus Christ.
 - 5. Observe that when Paul deals with this subject he reminds us of faith versus sight.
 - 6. Observe the confidence and willingness Paul expresses about his death.
- F. Paul viewed death as merely a departure from one place to a better place (Phil 1:23; II Tim 4:6).
 - 1. How could death be "gain" and "far better" if annihilation or soul sleep were true?
 - 2. Life to Paul was remaining in the flesh and death a mere departing to another place.

- G. Peter similarly described his death as leaving the tabernacle of his body (II Peter 1:13-15).
 1. Observe the distinction Peter draws between himself (“I”) and his tabernacle.
 2. A tabernacle is a temporary and movable dwelling place like a tent i.e. Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:33-44) and the tabernacle in the wilderness (II Sam 7:1-7).
 3. Death according to this text is discarding the temporary tabernacle and departing.

III. HEAVEN AND ETERNAL LIFE

- A. If Paul’s soul departed from his body (death), then he would be with Christ (II Cor 5:1-9).
 1. Animal spirits depart at death also but cease to exist and return to the earth (Ecc 3:19-21).
 2. A righteous man’s spirit departs his body at death and is immediately with Christ.
 3. Paul knew death would take him to Christ, and Jesus is with God in heaven (Heb 9:24).
- B. When the Spirit of Christ departed from His body, it went to heaven to be in God’s presence.
 1. He gave up the ghost (or spirit/soul) as did other men when they died (Mark 15:37).
 2. And He committed His Spirit into the hands of God where it was headed (Luke 23:46).
 3. He further told the beloved thief he would join Him that day in Paradise (Luke 23:43).
- C. Paradise is heaven where Jesus Christ sits on the throne of David in God’s presence.
 1. Paul was mysteriously and graciously allowed to visit Paradise once (II Cor 12:1-4).
 2. He called this place the third heaven to distinguish it from the sky and outer space.
- D. Your soul is transported to heaven by the angels of God in a chariot of fire.
 1. This is how Elijah was carried to heaven, and Elisha witnessed the event (II Kgs 2:9-12).
 2. Elisha knew these chariots and horsemen were all about him (II Kings 6:15-17).
 3. These are similar to the creatures Ezekiel saw in a vision of God’s glory (Ezekiel 1).
 4. Lazarus the beggar was carried from the rich man’s gate to heaven this way (Luke 16:22).
 - a. Abraham’s bosom is where Abraham is – Paradise and Heaven (Heb 12:23).
 - b. Regardless of his poverty, poor Lazarus had a royal chariot with servants.
 - c. Christ the Great Bridegroom sends His servants to take care of His bride.
 - d. “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” is a rather Scriptural song of a Christian’s hope.
- E. The last day you will get a glorified body, which is immortal and incorruptible (I Cor 15:35-57).
 1. It will be the body you inhabited on earth – but altered by resurrection and glorification.
 2. Both righteous and wicked receive their bodies back for the duration of eternity.
- F. Death is described as being gathered to your fathers or people – a family reunion if you will.
 1. Consider some great saints who were gathered at death (Gen 15:15; 25:8; 35:29; 49:33).
 2. Consider how the Lord will gather all the righteous together in the last day (II Thess 2:1).
 3. The wicked are gathered to their fathers – they shall never see light (Ps 49:19; II Pe 2:17).
 4. These are not mere figurative words, for heaven has the spirits of just men (He 12:22-24).
 5. David was confident that he would go to see his son that the Lord killed (II Sam 12:23).
- F. This great blessing was obtained by your Husband at His Father’s appointment (I Thess 5:9-11).

IV. THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE

- A. Death is a blessing for several reasons that are readily apparent to the man or woman of faith.
 1. You get to escape the flesh, which brings us into the temptation and bondage of sin.
 2. You get out of your sin-cursed body that gives you more and more problems with age.
 3. You get to be in heaven with Jesus, Who should be the grandest Person in your life.
 4. You get to leave all the problems, vanity, and vexation of spirit in this world behind.
 5. You travel to Paradise, which exceeds the things on earth by a margin too great to tell.
- B. Paul described his life as dedicated to Christ and his death as gain and far better (Phil 1:21-23).
- C. So comfortable is the death of the righteous and the certainty of their resurrection, we may call death “sleeping in Jesus” (John 11:11-14; Act 7:60; I Cor 11:30; 15:18,20,51; I Thess 4:13-14).
- D. God gave John a great message for us: Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord (Rev 14:13).
- E. Balaam by inspiration of God described the blessedness of saints dying (Numbers 23:10).
- F. David recorded the words of God that the death of saints is a precious thing (Psalm 116:15).

- G. Solomon spoke of the hope that the righteous have in their time of death (Proverbs 14:32).
- H. Isaiah spoke of the mercy we often miss by not considering when the righteous die (Is 57:1-2).
 - 1. Men do not consider that the righteous are often saved from general judgment by death.
 - 2. A righteous man finds peace, rest, and righteousness in death regardless of any trouble.
 - 3. Jesus exposes our righteousnesses (Matt 25:34-40) and gives righteousness (II Cor 5:21).
- I. Consider Paul's use of "confident" when discussing the nature and effect of death (II Cor 5:1-9).
 - 1. There is no distress of the righteous man's soul at death when he believes this gospel.
 - 2. We should prepare to follow those that went before by giving up the ghost willingly.
- J. Note Paul's warning that we walk by faith and not by sight and the superiority of eternal things.
 - 1. When considering the blessed reality of death, he warned us to walk by faith.
 - 2. When considering this life's troubles, he said eternal things are superior (II Cor 4:17-18).
- K. We have cause to face death with hope and comfort rather than sorrow (I Thess 4:13-18).
- L. The tree of life is now in Heaven reserved for His glorious bride (Gen 3:22-24; Rev 2:7; 22:2,14).
- M. Our degree of confidence and hope and boldness in death is based on our practical diligence.
 - 1. Peter described potential confidence if we were diligent in some things (II Pet 1:5-15).
 - 2. Paul counted all things loss and dung in hope of a blessed death (Philippians 3:8-11).
 - 3. Given our knowledge of death, we should apply our hearts unto wisdom (Psalm 90:12).
 - 4. The blessedness of death is for the righteous only (Num 23:10; Isaiah 57:1-2; Rev 14:13).
 - 5. Paul's life purpose was to labour to be accepted of him here or there (II Cor 5:9).

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. All human relationships – their benefits and hopes and all other aspects – end at the death of one.
 - 1. This is so true in marriage that the most popular vows have repeated, *Till death do us part*.
 - 2. People describe the death of a spouse or child or parent as leaving a hole in their heart.
 - 3. Death to earthly relationships and things is terribly final with nothing taken or truly left.
- B. But this consequence of death is not what took place at all when Jesus Christ died for His bride.
 - 1. He chose to die. He chose to die for His bride. He chose to rise again for her (Jn 10:15-18).
 - 2. While the death of Jesus Christ is incredibly important, His life is greater (Heb 5:10; 8:34).
 - 3. So far from death ending His everlasting love for her, it rather deepened its loving service.
- C. But this consequence of death is not what takes place at all when one of His children die on earth.
 - 1. Life on earth is absence from Christ (II Cor 5:6), though He is in us by His Spirit (Gal 4:6).
 - 2. Therefore, death is no longer a separating event but a uniting event with Him (II Cor 5:8).
 - 3. Death has no effect on His love except to enhance its intimacy and efficacy (Rom 8:38-39).
 - 4. Furthermore, death invites and brings one to a family reunion of true relatives (Gen 25:8).
- D. More could be written on this topic, and these points could be expanded upon, but this shall suffice.

***** See the song below that is quite appropriate for this great topic. *****

How Sweet to Die

Old School Hymnal, Twelfth Edition (2001), Song #345
Words and music by A. N. Whitten (1856-1949)

In memory of Elder S. A. Paine and his last words, "Oh, how sweet to die."

Farewell, vain world, I'm going home,
My Savior bids me come,
Sweet angels beckon from on high,
Then, O how sweet to die.

I'm glad that I am born to die,
From grief my soul shall fly,
Sweet angels beckon from on high,
Then, O how sweet to die.

I'll praise my Savior while I've breath,
I'll praise Him after death,
I'll praise His matchless name on high,
Then, O how sweet to die.

I soon shall pass this vale of death,
When I shall lose my breath,
And then my happy soul shall fly,
Then, O how sweet to die.