

Tuesday, September 25, 2012 – Gone but Never Forgotten

A very difficult year turned extremely painful two weeks ago as both my mother and father passed away within 26 hours of each other. Death is no respecter of persons. Young, old, rich, poor, ready or not; death calls at every home, and sooner or later, at every life.

**Eccl. 7:1-2 - A good name is better than precious ointment, And the day of death than the day of one's birth; Better to go to the house of mourning Than to go to the house of feasting, For that is the end of all men...**

There are many occasions of life that draw people together. But none affect us more than coming together in the house of mourning to share our tears. My family and I mourn their death. Mom and dad's passing leaves a void because of the steadfast presence they always had in our lives. But what we as Christians understand is that regardless what else occurred in their lives, this is the moment they lived for.

**Phil. 3:20,21 - For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself**

Heaven is at the very heart of true Christianity. We need regular reminders of how important heaven ought to be to us. A little girl looking up into moonlit, starlit skies said to her father, "**If heaven is so pretty on the wrong side, think of how beautiful it is on the right side.**" A father, longing to be with the 4 year old child he just buried, says, "**I'm going to have to work hard so I can go where my little boy has gone.**" One problem, in our own day, is the tendency to become so content with this world that we cease to strongly desire to go to heaven.

We don't know when our time on earth will come to an end, but we know it will. We don't know the time when the the Lord will return, but we know he will. Even in the days of the apostles, there were problems in people's thinking about heaven. For those who doeth the will of the Father, who is in heaven, Paul gives us a preview of the latter scene when, in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**, he says, "**But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.**" Paul speaks of the dead being raised then the living being caught up in the air.

Some people look at death and the subsequent judgment as things to fear. For a Christian, the Second Coming was never intended to strike fear in our hearts. Paul says, "**...and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with**

**these words.” (I Thessalonians 4:17-18).** There is great comfort in these words if you are in Christ. The Second Coming will be the greatest event in the History of the World.

Our fleshly, mortal bodies will not be what inherits heaven. Our natural body will undergo a change putting off our corruptible bodies and changing to a state of immortality. Paul describes the process in **I Corinthians 15:51-55** as he tells the church at Corinth, **"Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"** The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

**God provides us Heaven.** He will not force it upon us but will gladly give that crown of life to all who obey him. Please consider the following thoughts about our beautiful home:

**1 Pet. 1:3-5 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

The Scriptures affirm the reality of the heaven for which the Christian hopes:

**Col. 1:5 - because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel**

**Heaven is our true home.** Although we presently live in this world, we are not of it. **We are pilgrims, sojourners, aliens, strangers...**“Our citizenship is in heaven” - **1 Peter 2:11**

Death is only a termination of our earthly life, but not a termination of life. Paul shows us we have nothing to fear. He states in **2 Cor. 5:1**, **"For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens."**

**Heaven is where our Father is...**

- To “depart and be with Christ” is “far better” (**Phil. 1:23**). Cf. **2 Cor. 5:6-8**.
- Heaven is the home of God, our father
- Heaven is the home of Jesus our Savior
- Heaven is the home of the Holy Spirit

**Heaven is the home of rest for the weary.** In heaven there will be no more separation. There will be no more tearful “good byes” that force us to wait for the day of resurrection. We will go home to be with the Lord and **“thus shall we always be.”** It is called “everlasting life, eternal life. We will be there together, together with God...forever. In heaven there will be no more sin. You will find nothing that “defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie” (**Rev. 21:27**). The unrighteous, the works of the flesh and that which warrants the curse of God will be barred from its borders. No more Satan seducing us with our own desires. No more temptations, slips of weakness, shortcomings, failure. In heaven there will be no more “sadness” and “sorrow”. There will be no more battles to fight, no more burdens to bear.

**Rev. 21:4 - And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.**

**It Is VICTORY.** The saved will bask in the victory made possible by the cross (**Jn. 3:16**). Those overcoming will gain the victory of Jesus (**Rev. 15:2**). The born of God overcome the world (**1 Jn. 5:4**). Heaven is the final victory.

In heaven there will be rest

**Rev. 14:13 - “Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them”**

\* No more death – no more bedside vigils, no more mixed feelings about not wanting a loved one to suffer but not wanting to say goodbye.

\* No more mourning – no more sorrow, no more loneliness

\* No more crying over the loss of a loved one

\* No more pain – no physical or emotional pain.

My family weeps because of our loss, but we know it is only farewell until we meet on that bright shore of heaven.