

Saturday, November 18, 2017 - Our Victory in Death

"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living will take it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth" (Ecclesiastes 7:2-4)

My wife and I entered a "house of mourning" today to pay our respects to a tremendous Christian man who, I shared with you previously, was taken from us suddenly at the first of this month.

His wonderful, loving and kind wife greeted us as if we were a part of her family. One of the many things to love about her is she makes everyone she meets feel like family. Even on this day, her smile, graciousness, and strength were packaged with her continuous desire to praise God for her husband, the life he lived, the example he was and the fact he now rests in the bosom of Abraham. Our hearts were broken because of her pain and loss but filled with the beauty of her Faith which was exemplified by her singing of "It Is Well" as she and her family exited the auditorium during the final song.

Death serves as a vivid reminder that the curse of death has invaded our world as a result of sin and it brings grief upon all. In this grief, we turn to the only place that we can find genuine comfort, our God and Father. There is no greater comfort than that which is found in Him. We are reminded of His Words, "better is the day of death, than the day of birth" (Eccl. 7:14).

If one lives for God, your day of death will be greater than your day of birth . Your death ends NOTHING, but is the beginning of the greatest experience of all, a return to God (Ecc. 12:7). John said, "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These that are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. 7:13-17). John later writes that "...I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more..." (Rev. 21:3-4).

Death truly brings rest. We read the beautiful words of John in Revelation 14:13, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."

Noel lived his life with the attitude Paul wrote of to those at the church in Philippi: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if to live in the flesh, — if this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I know not. But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better."

Living a life in this manner ensures in that final day you will hear the words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34) and will allow your family and friends to enter that "house of mourning," while feeling sadness for their loss, knowing the comfort that the Lord has promised.

In death there is comfort; comfort in the fond memories of this dear loved one and how they touched all our lives, and comfort from the Lord. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 we read, "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Noel has preceded us on a path that will eventually bring all who are faithful to that eternal home with God. This is the great hope of Christianity.

Jesus tells us in John 14:2-3, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also."

The child of God never needs to fear death, for Jesus Christ came to earth to grant us victory over it. Our brother Noel is now enjoying the permanent comfort and joy which we all as Christians have been promised. Rejoice in that thought.

Farewell dear friend, until we meet on that bright shore of heaven.

Amen and amen.