

Midtown Messenger

Volume 2

February 3, 2019

Issue 5

THE BLESSINGS OF DEATH

Ronnie Scherffius

All have endured the grief and sorrow that comes with the passing of loved ones. All feels hopeless. Life seems not worth living. The sunniest days seem as dark as night. The loss to some becomes so overwhelming they sink into a depressive state. Some never fully recover. For those who perish outside of Christ there is no hope in death and for those who lose a loved one who is lost in sin there is a struggle to find comfort and closure.

This is not so for the Christian! For the child of God, death is but “a means to an end.” Death for the Christian is simply an open door to the joy, rest, and rewards of faithfulness. With the recent passing of our beloved and regarded brother Don Walker, we have occasion to reflect on what God, through His Word, has revealed to us about death, especially for the Christian.

God indicates that the death of the faithful is a gathering together with the righteous.

We read of the three great Hebrew patriarchs being *gathered together* in death. God revealed to Abraham, “And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age” (Gen. 15:15). As we continue to read the history of the father of the faithful we learn the complete fulfillment of God’s words: “And these are the days of the years of Abraham’s life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen [175] years. Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was **gathered to his people**” (Gen. 25:7-8). A similar epithet is given of Isaac: “And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was **gathered unto his people**, being old and full of days” (Gen. 35:29). In the land of Egypt, nearing the end of his days, Jacob called his sons to his side and said, “I am to be **gathered unto my people**: bury me with

my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite” (Gen. 49:29; cf. Gen. 25:9-10; 50:12-13).

The gathering together of these men certainly could not refer to their burial in the same place! Remember, Abraham was from Ur and his father was buried in Haran. The bodies of none of these men was together with their people in that sense! Their souls, however, were gathered together with the righteous souls of the saints. Luke wrote of the beggar Lazarus who died and was “gathered together” with his father Abraham; the rich man could only see them from a distance having been gathered to a different place (Luke 16:19-23). Luke’s record of Peter’s words clearly indicates that Judas was not gathered together with the righteous of God, but went “to his own place” (Acts 1:25). For the Christian, death is a gathering together — a reunion of the faithful of God to await the day of reward!

God refers to death of the faithful as a great victory. Looking forward to the resurrection Paul wrote: “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory.** O death, where is thy sting? **O grave, where is thy victory?**” (1 Cor. 15:54-55) The victory that our adversary (1 Pt. 5:8) once had over man in death has been swallowed up by the resurrection of Jesus and the promised resurrection of all men. The victory that our adversary had over us by the fear of death, man being separated from the tree of life because of sin (Gen. 3), has faded from the hearts of the righteous! We have gained the victory through Christ! In Him, we have won the victory over the adversary and the grave!

God considers death to be a very precious moment for those who belong to Him.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Psalms 116:15). In death we are removed from temptation. In death we are taken to the bosom of Abraham; to the paradise where the souls of God’s faithful await the end of time (Luke 16). In death the faithful rest from their labors (trials for their faith) and rest in their faithful works (obedient deeds) which stand as a testimony of their belonging to God (Rev. 14:13).

How sad it is to lose those we hold so dear. How dark the brightest day appears when our love one’s slip away in death. How wonderful to consider the blessings of death! In death we shall be gathered together with the faithful of God. In death we have no fear, for we have gained the victory in Christ! For us death is a very precious thing, for it is the open door to the end of our journey.

It’s Not Business; It’s Personal

By: Neal Pollard

Some years ago, when our sons were all teenagers and they were given a cell phone, there were times when they failed to use those to communicate if they got to their destination or answer when we needed to reach them. While I never did it, I was tempted on more than one occasion to contact the cellular provider and suspend their service. Why? Was it because I thought it was wasted cost? No. It was because it reflected a lack of thoughtfulness and responsibility. It wasn’t business. It was personal. Hebrews 10:25 is a sobering, New Testament passage. It addresses the Christian’s attitude toward the sacred assemblies of the church. What makes it sober is its contextual attachment to the eternal ramifications of abandoning those assemblies. God speaks of “no more sacrifice for sins,” “severer punishment,” “vengeance,” and “terrifying” (26-31) in connection with sinning willfully, of which forsaking the assemblies is a contextual example. But, why is God so exacting about this matter of our meeting together? In a nutshell, it is because these times, to God, are personal. The Bible is full of references to God’s desire to be worshipped and receive our worship. He is worthy. As Creator, He has the right. But, in this passage, it is personal in the sense that what He commands is so helpful to you and me. Written on the foundation of the fact that our High Priest, Jesus, has given us access to God (19), the writer urges us to do three things: (1) Draw near (22), (2) Hold fast, and (3) Consider. It’s the third one I want to

briefly notice: and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near (24-25).

There should be a personal connection. Notice how the writer reveals this. He says “us” and “our.” He says “one another” twice as well as “together.” Christianity is not a solitary condition. We must see ourselves in connection with the rest of the body. Assembling is about seeing ourselves as a vital piece of a more important whole. Forsaking the assemblies is, for whatever reason, selfish and self-centered. It is done blind to the needs of others.

There should be a personal submission. The command is “consider” followed by two participles that tell us how to obey the command: “not forsaking” and “encouraging” (more on that in a second). So, in a discussion about the whole group, there is a command each must strive to obey. As it is a command, ultimately this is as personal as God and the individual. I fail to consider my role, I fail in my relationship with God.

There should be a personal obligation. Each of us is obligated to stimulate and encourage everyone else. It’s not just those who publicly lead worship or teach class. The reclusive saint who dashes out before services are over has missed this. The clammed up Christian who never reaches out to fellow saints but is closed to others misses this. The discouraging and unloving brother and sister rebels against their duty. I should never be focused on how well others are stimulating and encouraging me. Instead, I should be so lost in my efforts to be a blessing to others that I have no energy to evaluate how others are doing.

There should be a personal anticipation. This is more than social and emotional. It’s spiritual and eternal. Those other aspects are means to that end, but don’t miss the end. Be a blessing to others at “church services” “as you see the day drawing near” (25). Not Sunday. Keep reading. The Judgment Day. I need to remember that “here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come” (13:14). One of the best places to stay reminded of that is through our assemblies, as our activities in class and worship and our teaching and preaching keep us anchored to that ultimate reality. This world is not my home! Christianity is not about the business of going through the motions, even doing right things. No, no! It is personal. May that truth permeate our attitudes toward not just God, but His children.

PRIVILEGED TO SERVE

Week of February 3, 2019

Sunday Morning:

Announcements: Jeff Harris
Scripture Reading: Sammy Scherffius

Lord's Supper & Offering

Bread: Doug Jobes
Fruit of the Vine: Dennis Bryson
Offering: Bryce Dolan
Assist: Scott DeDear, Kirk FitzSimmons, Curtis Scherffius

Sunday Evening: Doug Jobes, Dennis Bryson

Prayer

A.M. Closing: Ron White
P.M. Closing: Mark FitzSimmons

Ushers: Don Lynn
Allen Clifton

Wednesday Devotional: Bryant Siegel

Open/Close Building: Hutt

Sound System: Don Lynn

Greeters:

Don Lynn
Allen Clifton

Prepare Communion: Hutt

To Our Visitors: We welcome you to our service. Perhaps this is the first time you have visited us. It is our desire to have you return often and give us a chance to become better acquainted with you. You will find visitor cards on the back of the pew in front of you. Please fill one out.

If you have a Bible Question that you would like Ronnie to answer on the 4th Sunday evening of the month, you can submit them in the mailbox in the foyer or email Ronnie.

IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

LES DALTRY, who is at PAM room 302; GLENODINE PITTS, who is at DeTar Navarro; MICKEY TISUE, who is at Twin Pines North room 409; PEGGY MATLOCK, who was in the hospital for high blood pressure; THE FAMILY OF DON WALKER, Don passed away last week.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 3: Forever Young Meeting after evening worship
Feb. 5,12,19,26: Men's & Ladies' Bible Class @ 10am
Feb. 9: GEMS meeting
Feb. 10: Jr/Sr Devo hosted by Mark /Nia FitzSimmons
Feb. 23-24: Southwest School of Bible Studies: Student Lectures hosted by MidTown. Potluck luncheon will follow morning services and there will be a 1pm afternoon service in lieu of the 5pm service.

AREA EVENTS

Feb. 28-Mar. 3: Arise: Spiritual Growth workshop @ SW church of Christ
Mar. 29-31: Gospel meeting @ Adams Street church of Christ. More info on the bulletin board in hallway.
Mar. 30: South Texas Youth Lectures @ Adams Street . More info on the bulletin board in hallway.

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES:

Happy Birthday: Richard Tisue (2); Letty Randle (7); Wayne Martin (8)

KEEP IN PRAYER

MIDTOWN MEMBERS:

Jeff Cannady
Dee Gilpatrick
Ann Pantel
Clark Withers

SHUT-INS:

Faye Henderson
Sandy Malone

If you would like to add or remove a name on the "Keep in Prayer" List, please see Nina Siegel.

MIDTOWN CHURCH OF CHRIST

Minister: Ronnie Scherffius
Secretary: Nina Siegel

TIMES OF SERVICES

Sunday Bible Class: 9:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship: 10:00AM
Sunday Evening Worship: 5:00PM
Wednesday Bible Class: 7:00PM

RECORD OF ATTENDANCE

Week of January 27, 2019

Bible Class.....80
A.M. Worship.....104
P.M. Worship.....96
Wednesday Bible Study.....80

Offering \$3,883

QUICK REFERENCE

Use this quick reference to help you grow in knowledge:

Sin

All have sinned.....Rom. 3:10,23
Price/consequence.....Rom. 6:23
1 John 3:4; Jam. 4:17; Rom. 14:23



SUPPORTED WORKS

India - Mani Pagidipalli
New Zealand - James & Emily Cammock
Bible Land Passages - John & Carla Moore
Southwest School of Bible Studies - Cody Kilgore

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