



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

Scripture Reading Week of October 9th - 15th

Monday

- ❖ Jeremiah 11, 12
- ❖ Proverbs 30
- ❖ Titus 1

Tuesday

- ❖ Jeremiah 13, 14
- ❖ Proverbs 31
- ❖ Titus 2

Wednesday

- ❖ Jeremiah 15, 16
- ❖ Ecclesiastes 1
- ❖ Titus 3

Thursday

- ❖ Jeremiah 17, 18
- ❖ Ecclesiastes 2
- ❖ Philemon

Friday

- ❖ Jeremiah 19, 20
- ❖ Ecclesiastes 3
- ❖ Hebrews 1

Saturday

- ❖ Jeremiah 21, 22

Sunday

- ❖ Jeremiah 23, 24

Death and Dying in Relation to Prayer

By Pastor Powers

I recently had an old train of thought awakened when a friend and long-time member of our church asked us to pray for his dying grandfather who is 89 years of age. As I listened to my friend share the request I was asking myself how I should pray. What would I say in my prayer? What are the theological underpinnings that will govern and guide my prayer for this dying saint?

Here are a few of the theological underpinnings:

1. Death is an enemy.
2. For a believer death is a defeated enemy. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26). These are the precious words of Paul that grip the hearts of all believers. We know that death has been defeated by Christ's resurrection. We also know that the final victory has yet to occur. The dead-in-Christ are still in their graves. It will not be until Christ returns that the final victory chant will be heard: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:54-55).

Although the enemy has been defeated; that defeat is still only seen with the eyes of faith. It is not yet a reality in time and space. The dead-in-Christ whose bodies are yet in the grave know there is more to come. They are awaiting their "adoption as sons, the redemption of their bodies" (Rom. 8:23).

3. At death a believer is ushered into the presence of Christ. Paul said, "We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). He added to the Philippians, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better" (Philip. 1:23).
4. Death ends a life of labor and ushers believers into final rest. The Apostle John wrote in Revelation 14:13, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"
5. Physical death is not punishment for sins in the life of a believer. Paul says in Romans 8:1 that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. All the penalty for our sins has been paid. Not even our physical death is punishment. Physical death was part of the curse upon the fallen world. All living things die regardless of whether or not they sin. Trees die; fish die; stars die; humans die. Death is the final outcome of life in a fallen world. But no human being really dies – believer or unbeliever. Oh no! We are still very much alive even when the physical body is placed in the grave.



.....continued on page 2

When I began to ponder such statements as these, I felt my heart ready to pray for Mr. Jackson, a dying saint who is nearly ten years away from the century mark. The sentence that fell upon my mind was this: Death is the final and ultimate test of one's faith. All at once I saw a picture and a parable that helped me put the reality into a powerful frame.

A few months earlier I had hoisted my 8 year-old son onto the roof of our church building. We had been flying his kite in the yard at church when it came crashing down on the roof. All attempts at pulling it off the roof proved pointless since the string was getting hung-up on the shingle tabs. The only solution was to hoist him up. (Don't tell his mom!) He successfully freed the kite and sent it down to the ground. He stood up as straight and tall as he could, took a good look around from his new perch and began to grin from ear-to-ear; but he needed to come down.

There had been no time at the onset to go and get a ladder. The only way down was for him to jump into my arms. I gave him the instructions: "Sit on the edge of the roof and just lean forward until you fall. I will catch you." I could immediately see the fear in his eyes as he walked closer and closer to the edge. The confidence he had exuded just a few seconds before was all gone. There was nothing but fear left. "Come on son, you only need to fall about three feet and I will catch you." He wormed his way closer giving panic glances at the closing distance between his feet and the edge and my eyes. Up and down, up and down went his eyes from his feet to my face as his feet took tiny little shuffle steps closer and closer. "Now sit down and dangle your feet over the edge," I said. He obeyed.

"Daddy, are you sure you can catch me?"

"Absolutely, Son! Now just lift your hands over your head and fall forward. I will put my hands right under your arms and catch you."

"I don't know, Dad. I'm scared!"

"I know you are son; but you just have to trust me. I will catch you."

Isn't that a tiny picture of what goes on in the mind of a dying saint who is in his right mind? Jesus has promised me all these years that all I need to do is "fall forward" and he will be there to catch me. On the other side of this blink, Jesus will be there; won't he?

Can you see how the process of dying strikes a little fear in the heart of even the most seasoned saints? Death is an enemy. I don't think we should pray for, speak about or talk to the dying in a flippant manner. I think we need to see that there is a very real test of faith that goes on in the heart and mind of believers. I think we need to be careful to let them speak in their dying process and share their fears so that we can do for them what I did for son – give them the reassurance that Jesus will catch them!

As I stand on the bank looking across the river to the other side I see lush green grass, fruit-filled trees; and the smiling face of my Savior. I so desperately want to be there with him. But the process of stepping out into the current of death is a fearful prospect.

John Bunyan has captured this image like no other in his *Pilgrim's Progress*.

So I saw that when they awoke, they prepared themselves to go up to the [Celestial] City. But, as I said before, the reflections of the sun upon the City were so extremely glorious, for the City was pure gold, that they could not behold it with an open face, at least not yet...

Now I further saw that between them and the gate was a River, but there was no bridge so that pilgrims might cross over; moreover, the River was very deep. So Christian and Hopeful were shocked at such a sight; but the men escorting them said, "You must pass through this River or else you cannot arrive at the gate of the City." Then the pilgrims asked if there was another way to the gate. The Shining Ones answered, "Yes, but no one else has been permitted to travel that way since the foundation of the world except Enoch and Elijah; and no others will be

....continued on page 3



allowed until the sounding of the last trumpet.” Then the pilgrims began to despair in their minds, and especially Christian; they looked this way and that way, but no alternative route could be found by which they could avoid the River. Then they asked the men if the water was all of the same depth. They replied, “No,” but could offer no further help other than the comment, “You shall find it deeper or shallower according to your trust in the King of the place.”

At this the pilgrims resigned themselves to face the water. Upon entering, Christian began to sink so that he cried out to his good friend Hopeful, “I sink in deep water; the billows go over my head, all his waves go over me! Selah.

Then Hopeful replied, “Be of good cheer, my brother, For I feel the bottom and it is firm.” Then said Christian, “Ah my friend, the sorrows of death have totally compassed me, so that I shall not see the land that flows with milk and honey.” And with that a great darkness and sense of horror fell upon Christian so that he could not see ahead of him. Here, to a large degree, he also lost his senses so that he was unable to remember or talk intelligently about any of those sweet refreshments that he had experienced while traveling on pilgrimage. Rather all of his talk tended to reveal the terror of his mind and the fear that he would perish in that River and never gain entrance into the Celestial City. Here also, those who were able to stand by observed that he was greatly troubled with thoughts about the sins that he had committed, both before and after he became a pilgrim....

Therefore Hopeful struggled here in his attempts to keep his brother’s head above water; yes sometimes Christian would seem to have sunk down for good, then after a short while he would rise again seeming half dead. Hopeful would also attempt to comfort him, saying, “Brother, I see the gate, and men standing nearby to welcome us.” But Christian would answer, “It is you, it is you they are waiting for; you have been hopeful ever since I first knew you.” “And so have you,” said Hopeful to Christian. “Ah brother,” replied Christian, “surely if I was right [with the King] he would come to my rescue; but on account of my sins, he has brought me this snare to abandon me.”

“The said Hopeful, “My brother, you have quite forgotten the text where it speaks of the wicked, ‘There is no band in their death, but their strength is firm; they are not troubled as other men, neither are they plagued like other men.’ These troubles and distresses that you’re experiencing in these waters are no indication that God has abandoned you; rather they are sent to test you as to whether you will recall to mind evidences of his past goodness, and now rely upon him in the midst of present trials.”

Then I saw in my dream that Christian was in deep thought for a while, so that Hopeful spoke to him further, “Be of good cheer, Jesus Christ makes you whole.” And with that, Christian exclaimed with a loud voice, “Oh I see him again! And he tells me, ‘When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they will not overflow you.’” Then they both took courage, with the result that the enemy then became as still as stone, until they had fully crossed over. Therefore, Christian now discovered solid ground to stand upon; and so it followed that the rest of the River was found to be shallow. And thus they both crossed over.

Church, let’s not speak flippantly of death and dying. Let us always remember that although it is a conquered foe, it is still a foe nonetheless. The defeat of death is seen only through the eyes of faith, which means that death is the last and ultimate test of one’s faith.

1. Do not let death become a cop-out to life.
2. Do not remove the sting of death that is only ultimately removed in the resurrection.
3. Do not minimize the test of one’s faith; rather, pray that their faith not fail.
4. Remind the dying that Jesus will be there to catch them and the sting of death will lessen in proportion to their trust in Jesus!

We need not pray for the dead; that is for sure! But we certainly need to pray for the dying!
