

Going Home!¹

9/5/10

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(I preached a version of this three years ago)
(In memory of Peggy Dixon)

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints (Ps 116:15).

We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8).

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² But if I live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. ²⁴ Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. (Phil 1:21-24).

But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9).

Introduction

One is not prepared to live until he is prepared to die. Peggy was prepared to live.

But what are we to say about the Christian? Has the sting of death been removed? What should be our attitude toward our own death?

¹ I use bold and underlining to help me preach; not the way I normally write.

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But do Christians despair over death? Is that the end of the person whom we know and loved so much? Sometimes we tend to think so, and we look at it as the bitter end of a loving relationship.

Of course it is the end of the relationship if we are true believers and the person who died is not. But for the purpose of this sermon, let us assume that we and someone we love in Christ who has died. What then? Let us consider the encouraging words of the apostles in the bulletin (see the first sermon: 2 Cor 5:8; 1 Cor 2:9).



(Peggy Dixon

and her grandson just before the Lord took her)

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I. What Does Our Future Look Like?

Most people don't plan for the future, but only for a few years down the road. When I say what does our future look like, I'm thinking of 100 years from now, 1,000 years from now, to which someone may say, "But I won't be around then." Precisely the point—what then? What will your future look like? Will it be a life full of good fruit in service to Christ, or will it be one full of self, IRAs, and money, as good as it is to prepare for retirement here? What kind of wealth will we have? The Lord told us that if we are rich toward God that cannot be taken away:

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¹⁹ Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal (Matt 6:19-20).

And the way to have treasure in heaven is to love God by worshipping Him, by loving His people, by meeting the needs of one another, by developing the kind of Christian character as we see in the beatitudes, rearing our children in the faith by bringing them to church, teaching them the faith and the catechism, teaching them to memorize God's word, and so on. But we have fallen into the world's trap of wanting them to have a good future in the sense of collecting a lot of toys, having a good job to make a lot of money. And though that is not wrong in itself, yet without the Triune God it is a fool's paradise, whistling in the wind, a vapor.

Have you heard the saying "you can't take it with you"? It is **NOT** true but is one of the devil's lies to get us to do nothing. Here is what the Bible says about **Going Home** and what we can take with us.

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** (1 Cor 15 58).

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**" (Rev 14:13).

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things

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of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then **each one's praise will come from God** (1 Cor 4:5).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, **that each one may receive the things done in the body**, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Cor 5:10).

Jesus said:

In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to **prepare a place for you** (John 14:2).

He is the groom preparing a place for His bride!

II. What Is It Like to Die?

(1) Consider what it is like from God's view:

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints (Ps 116:15).

We read the Bible too fast. Think about that first word for a moment, **precious**. What is God saying? The word means "valuable, of great value" to God. For us who are left behind, it is often a great loss, but not for God. For Him it is a great gain! He wants to receive His child home!

(2) What is death like from our view? **First**, the sting of death will not be totally removed until after the resurrection, though once we die it is over, and we are in the presence of the Lord Jesus. When Jesus died, He cried out with a loud voice (Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46), which would seem to indicate

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some degree of stress, though His death was unique since He was bearing the sin of the world.

First Corinthians 15:53-57 states:

⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, **then** shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Read the verses over again slowly, and understand that the final blow to death is dealt at the Last Day resurrection, not now, though for Christians it is not the horror it is for unbelievers.

Second, Christ has released us from death's dominion. We live for Christ, not to avoid death.

¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and **release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.** (Heb 2:13-15)

Let me give you again what to me is a precious example of one dying in Christ in victory. My maternal grandmother, Mee-Maw, was visited by her daughter, my mother, after she fractured her hip. They had just read the Scripture together and prayed, and my mother prayed something like this: "O

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Lord, I ask that if this is Your time to take mother that You would do so quickly and without pain, in thine only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." Mee-Maw opened her eyes, looked at mother, and she was gone. Just that quick.

What was the Apostle Paul's view of death? From the passages given in the bulletin, we see that his view was one of victory, for he said "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21), "absent from the body, present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). You see for us death has not won, Christ has won by His bodily resurrection. **Death is not our master**, the living Christ is our Master, and as difficult as it would be to lose a loved one, that is not the end, and we are not to sorrow as those who have no hope, though we do sorrow (1 Thess 4:13).

In other words, **Peggy's life is not over**; she has entered a new phase, into eternal life in its full manifestation.

III. Should a Christian Want to Die?

This question can be answered yes or no. (1) **No**, if one is in despair, not loving God's providence, wants to hang on to this world because he/she loves it more than Christ, is upset with his station in life, not trusting God. The Christian should not want to die under those circumstances. One must learn to live by faith, and Christ will put pressure on a person more and more until they learn to live by faith, to trust Him and His providence.

(2) This can also be answered **Yes** if one has lived a full life for Christ, is in a lot of physical pain, has little left to do here, and genuinely wants to see the Lord Jesus.

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But we are not allowed to take matters in our own hands and take our own lives. We must be patient, waiting for the Lord Christ to meet our needs in His own way and in His own time. Our part is to use the means, to trust Him, to pray, to read His word, to worship with His people, to serve Him by serving others.

But for a Christian to want to die just for the trials of life reveals one who is not healthy spiritually. This was the case with Jonah and with Elijah, but the Lord was patient with each one. Yet He did not allow them to stay in that stupor, but lovingly brought them out, making them persevere in faith and patience.

One great blessing for us is that death died in the death of Christ because of His resurrection. Death was the worst Satan could do to us, and now most of the sting is gone. It used to be the case that Christians died at home with the family. Peggy had that privilege.

IV. What Will It Be Like to Pass into the Presence of Christ?

For a Christian it will be great victory! The Lord Jesus will be delighted, and what we shall see cannot be described:

But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9).

We must get this firmly fixed in our minds that for us death is victory, gain, not pain, all our trials are over. I often

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say when I preach a funeral that the loved one could not come back if he/she would, and would not return if he/she could.

But what about seeing beyond? I personally believe that God sometimes gives dying Christians a glimpse beyond just before death. For example, **D. L. Moody stated:**

It is beautiful! It is like a trance! If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here! God is calling me, and I must go!

This is my triumph; this is my coronation day! I have been looking forward to it for years!

[Then his face lit up, and he said in a voice of joyful rapture:] “Dwight! Irene! I see the children’s faces,” (referring to his two grandchildren whom God had taken home within the past year).

Where is the power of death now when one has gone home? What will it be like to be there? Here is a litany of things about heaven that we read in the Bible:

- Their robes are made white in the blood of the lamb
- They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore;
- the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;
- for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters.
- And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes
- Satan is not an issue for them anymore
- There is no pain, disease, or criminals

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- They are in the presence of the Lamb who loved them and gave Himself for them
- They are there forever and ever!

Frances Havergal, the songwriter, lived and moved in the Word of God. His Word was her constant companion. On the last day of her life, she asked a friend to read to her the second chapter of Isaiah. When the friend read the sixth verse, "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee," Miss Havergal stopped her. She whispered, "Called – held – kept. I can go home on that!" And she did go home on that. She found His promises unfailing.

Let us fully live everyday as God's gift to us, because it is His gift to us! Let us live as if each day is our last, for only what we do for Christ will last, but what we do for Him goes with us also.

Conclusion

What is the bottom line, what can you take with you? We don't live just to avoid death; it is not our master, Christ is!

Have you lost a loved one who was in Christ? He/she is in the presence of the Lord and is waiting for you. Have you lost a spouse, a parent? His wisdom is always right, and when you enter the presence, behind the veil, and see the nail prints, and see the loved one, it will make sense. All will be over. Victory will be sweet. Faith in God's providence will be honored.

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Next time you attend a funeral, pretend that Jesus is there, for in fact if the person were a Christian, He is there. Think of the funerals that He attended while He was in the body on earth. There was the widow of Nain, and He raised Her son. There was the nobleman's son who was close to death, and Jesus healed him. A ruler of the synagogue had a daughter who had died (Matt 9:18), and when Jesus went there He raised her from the dead. Then there was the tomb of Lazarus that Jesus attended, and after rotting four days He raised him from the dead. Do you see the point? **The dead could not stay dead when the Author of life showed up?** Indeed, there is no funeral that Jesus attended where the dead stayed dead.

One of the greatest stories of victory over death is seen in the New Testament, in the death of Stephen who was the first Christian martyr, stoned to death for the faith. As they were about to stone him to death, Stephen stated:

“Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man **standing** at the right hand of God!” (Acts 7:56)

“**Precious** in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,” so **precious** that the great King of the ages, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who took His **seat** at the right hand of His Father, **stood** – He **STOOD** – to receive His saint.

AMEN.