***The Doctrine of Physical Death

RV190-02***

Please open your Bibles to Revelation 14:12-13. Our subject is "The Blessed Status of Saints."

The apostle John has heard a third angel come on the scene in his vision, and pronounce a terrible divine judgment on the worshipers of the antichrist. These rejecters of Jesus Christ will spend eternity in the conscious torment of the lake of fire. This judgment is demanded by the justice of God, and there will never be a moment of rest from this agony, and it will not be mitigated by the grace and mercy of God. This is the destiny of all who reject the salvation of the grace of God, thus trusting in Christ as one's Savior. Without that, there is no hope.

John now turns to the status of tribulation believers, who have been under the gun; who have been under great pressure; and, who have trusted in Jesus Christ, and have opened openly rejected the identifying mark of the antichrist. John proceed to describe their loyalty to the Lord, and to the doctrines that they have learned, and he proclaims what their eternal future will be in contrast to those of the unbelievers that have just been dealt with by the angel.

**The Perseverance of the Saints**

So, in verse 12, we read, "Here is the perseverance of the saints." The word "here" introduces a response of believers to the antichrist. The believers have had a totally different response than most of the world, in contrast to the response of those who worship the antichrist. Here is the perseverance of the believers. The Greek word "perseverance" looks like this: "hupomone." This word means "steadfastness." It refers to the most valuable quality in the Christian life: consistency – standing firm on the Word of God, and consistency in your relationship to Jesus Christ. This is a very significant word, and John uses it to point out that there is a consistency (a solid steadfastness) on the part of the believers in the tribulation.

**Saints**

These people are called "saints" ("hagios"). As you know, a saint is not some special, super-holy person such as the Roman Catholic Church makes out. The word "saint" applies to all believers, because it means "set apart." Every Christian is set apart to eternal life through Christ. So, automatically, you are saints. A church may be terrible: full of carnality; and, full of maneuverings, and sneakiness, and competitions. We have two books to the church in Corinth, and it's not a very pretty picture. Yet at the very opening of 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul calls them saints.

Well, they were not that in their practice, but they certainly were that in their position, and their ultimate destiny. But this does tell us that we are dealing here with believers in the tribulation who have been set apart to eternal life. These, of course, I'm sure you will understand, are not church-age believers. The church has already previously been removed before the seven-year tribulation began. So, what we are dealing with here are people who have become believers during the tribulation. They were in the tribulation as unbelievers, and through the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists and other gentile teachers of doctrine, they have committed themselves to Christ, and have been born again.

**The Rapture**

What happened to the church is described for us in 1 Corinthians 4:13-17, which tells us that, suddenly, at any moment of time, Jesus Christ can return. He stops in outer space. He does not come down to this earth. And He turns to the angel (probably Gabriel), and gives him the nod. The angel Gabriel sounds the trumpet, and first the graves open, and every Christian goes zapping up to meet Christ in space. Then all the believers who are alive go up to meet Him as well. It will be very, very unlikely that a large number of you will not be among those believers who are still alive to meet Christ in the air at the rapture. The odds are enormously in favor of a large number of you, if not most of you, experiencing that wild ride through space alive, because it's going to happen very soon. So, that passage describes what has happened to the Christians. So, we're dealing here with saints (born-again people), but those who have been born again under the adverse conditions of the tribulation, when it's the kiss of death to be a loyal follower of Jesus Christ.

**Obedience**

These people are further described as: "Those who keep the commandments." The word "keep" here connotes the idea of obedience, and it indicates that this was their constant pattern. They were consistently obedient to the doctrines of Scripture, and what they were obedient to is called the commandments of God. The Greek word is "entole." This refers to the laws of God. This refers to what we refer to sometimes as God's honor code. This is what I spoke of at our graduation ceremony here last Tuesday at the academy. I talked to the students and to the parents about the fact that God has an honor code. That honor code is in the form of these moral principles which preserve our freedom. This is the sort of thing that the angel is referring to here – that these people, born again in the tribulation, were starting way behind in their knowledge of doctrine, but what they knew, they were consistently obedient to. These saints were both hearers of the Word and doers.

**Steadfast**

Furthermore, we're told that they have another consistency, and that is in their faith to Jesus Christ. The word "faith" here, as you know, means "trust." Here it is trust in someone. Here it is trust in Jesus. These tribulation believers maintain their confidence in Jesus Christ in the face of suffering for His name. These people have been steadfast. The people described in verse 9-11 have been willing to go along with the crowd. They have accepted the antichrist as their god. They worship him. Their destiny is spelled out in horrible detail. For these believers in the tribulation, they have taken a different minority position. They have rejected what the crowd is doing.

Of course, some of these believers will be martyred, while others will survive by going into hiding. The threat of punishment and of death for anybody who believes in Jesus Christ and refuses the mark of the antichrist will be very severe. All the tribulation world will know who the people are who stand for God.

It's not too hard today to know, when you get to know someone, whether they stand for God or not. But it'll be much easier then, because all you have to do is look at the forehead or the hand. They'll be able to just take a look down at the hand, and you won't see the mark, and they'll know whether this is one of the Christ loyalists, or one of the followers of the New Age movement who are finding our own deity.

So, all the tribulation world is going to be able to identify these people who are loyal to Jesus Christ and who obey doctrine. No matter how severe the suffering of these tribulation believers may become, their lot is going to be infinitely better than that of the unbelievers, which we have already studied in verses 9-11. That's a good thing for us to remember. God never promised us a bed of roses. Therefore, you expect, as Jesus said one time, "Boys, you know that it wouldn’t be unrealistic, the way they persecuted Me, that they won't persecute you who are My followers. You know that they're going to jump on you even worse, after I'm gone, than they jumped on Me. So, get ready for it. Take it in stride. But I want to tell you this, boys: I will always be with you. I will never leave you. I'll never forsake you. So, don't worry about the clowns who are going to jump on you. You do your job; you carry out your mission; you operate on doctrine; and, you maintain your loyalty to Me, and you're going to be a winner. I'm going to carry you through your mission."

So, these people have found, indeed, that being a believer, and remaining loyal to Jesus Christ, and not compromising with the antichrist, is going to be hard, and everybody is going to know that you're doing it. Therefore, you're going to be exposed to public ridicule. There is nothing so powerful in all the world, however, as a believer who exercises positive addition to Bible doctrine, and is entirely dependent upon Jesus Christ to carry him through the devil's world. As long as you don't try maneuvering, and as long as you don't try carrying out little devices, and as long as you don't try operating on your own, you're safe. You're home safe every time. The battle is the Lord's. Stay out of the Commander's way, and also stay out of the way of His whip.

The tribulation saints will keep the faith, and they will be loyal to our Lord.

Verse 13 immediately follows up on this. John says that he now hears a voice from heaven. This reference to heaven here is the third heaven, or God's throne room. The speaker from heaven is not identified. It may be God, or it may be an angel. Nevertheless, it carries God's authoritative policy, which is being enunciated here. John is further told that he is: "to write." The Greek word is "grapho." This is in the aorist sense, which means: "Now, at this immediate point, John, pick up your pen, and start writing what I'm what I'm about to say. And you are to do it." It's the active voice. And it is imperative. It is command.

Suddenly, John is given a command to start writing: "Now, listen. Take it down word-for-word," and he proceeds to do that. This stresses the importance of the message. And God wants it to be accurately preserved. This is just a little microcosm example of how all of Scripture is produced. It is produced under the direct supervision of God, under His direct care and leading, so that what is penned on the parchment is exactly true. This message is of such great importance for believers, who are living in the tribulation, to know and to understand. And the lesson is there for us who live now as well. And He doesn't want to have any mistake about it: "Pick up your pen, John. Write it down as you listen to it, so that you get it straight.

**Blessed**

What is the message? It begins with a very happy word: "Blessed." This word is the Greek word "makarios." In Matthew 5, we have what we call "the Beatitudes, and they all begin with this word "blessed:" "Blessed are they ... Blessed are they ... Blessed are they ..." This word means "happy." So, anybody who wants to be happy should pay serious attention to what God says is blessed. He's referring to somebody who is in a happy status here. Namely, he says, "Blessed are the dead" (referring to a specific category of tribulation dead here). But it is true of all believers who die: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who die "in the Lord" indicates that they're born-again people. They are saints.

This is what is referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:18. Then those (Christians of the church-age) also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." He's talking about falling asleep in Christ, meaning Christians who have died, but who are in Christ. In this passage, he says, "If the dead people are never raised (which is what the philosophers were arguing – you die; you're gone; you're like a dog; and, you never come to life again), then even those who have died in Christ have died in a hopeless condition, because they're never going to be raised if that's true.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, we're told how we get into Christ: "For by one Spirit (God the Holy Spirit) we are all baptized into one body." We are baptized into Christ at the point of our salvation by an act of God the Holy Spirit. So, this expression, "those who die in Christ," is referring here to tribulation believers who died. And they are the happy ones, in contrast to the worshipers of the antichrist.

As you look around the antichrist's world, the people who are going to be prospering; the people are going to be living the good life; and, the people for whom things are going to be going well, are going to be the evil ones – those who bear the antichrist's mark. They are supposedly the happy ones. Here, God says, "No, that's a misconception. Never take things by the way they look. Always gauge them by the Word of God. Then you'll know what is reality. Those people are not the ones who are happy. The happy ones are those who die, but they die as believers in the Lord.

He had the words "from now on," which probably refers here to the point of mid-tribulation, when the antichrist finally brings to fruition the political movements that are being put into motion today – the political movements toward a world government. At mid-tribulation, that world government comes into being, and along with it, the antichrist then turns against the religious system that has existed in the first three-and-a-half years around the world, and he destroys it, and he sets up his own religious system under the false prophet with himself as the god of all humanity. So, this, from this point on, is a specific, dramatic turning point. And it probably refers to that mid-tribulation time when the persecution of believers is going to intensify. So far, believers have been able to squeak by in one way or another. But now, it's going to get really tough. And it is now that they need the comfort of understanding what happens after death.

This is the great tragedy with most people. They don't have the foggiest notion of what happens when somebody dies. They only see the immediate thing before them, and the sorrow, and the tragedy, and the disappointment that this person is gone takes place, but they have no idea what is in the future. And they indicate that by their focus upon the dead person.

I have buried dozens of people in funeral services. People come to me and they say, "When I die, please do this, and this, and this, and they give me instructions. I say, "Right," and I write it down. What are they saying? They want the focus to be on the Lord.

The first original tape, called "The Introduction Tape" of our Berean Basic Doctrine series, had an interesting beginning. There was a mother who was a great supporter of Berean Academy, and who found she had cancer. And the disease was progressing badly. And she came to me one day at one of our parent-teacher events thing, and she said, "If I die, and my pastor (a Dallas seminary professor at a church in Dallas) is not on hand, I've left instructions to ask that you conduct the service, and I want you to focus on the gospel and Christ. And when we had that service, they recorded it. And after the service, they gave me a copy. And as I listened to it, it was the context of facing death; what took place; what has happened; how, for this lady, it is a happy occasion; and, how it could have been a great sorrow and tragedy. When I listened to it, I said, "This should be an introduction to the whole Basic Doctrine series, introducing the first step of salvation. That's the first issue of doctrine."

So, for years, that tape (we just cut out her name) was as it was delivered, and people found it extremely informative, and many were saved by just listening to that tape. We have since revised it somewhat. It's not in its original form. The content is basically the same. But we've added some clarification.

The issue is to know what has happened when a person dies. Of all the people for whom I've conducted funerals, I've never stopped by to look upon them in the casket. Of all the relatives that have ever died, while everybody is rushing up to see this person, I never do that. I have a memory of the last time I knew them in life, and all those people (for whom I ran a service) are all still alive in my mind. I never saw them dead. I'm not interested in looking upon that shell of the people that very often were loved ones to me, or very significant as soldiers in God's service.

So, knowing what's happening is so important. And from this point on, God the Holy Spirit says, "Things are going to get tough for you Christians. In contrast to what's going to happen that He has already described in verse 9-11, to the horrors that the unbelievers are going to face, you people, be clear in your mind what's going to happen to you if you become a martyr. And it's going to happen to those that are important to you, your loved ones and your family, if they should be brought down. It is better to die as a believer at the hand of the antichrist, than to have his favor, and face the judgment of Revelation 14:9-11."

Then God the Holy Spirit Himself steps up to the microphone of this P.A. system out in space that John is listening to. Here suddenly, he hears the voice of God the Holy Spirit. He says the Greek word for "Yes" ("nai"), which is God the Holy Spirit saying, "Yes, indeed. That's so true." Now, this must have been really awesome to John hearing the voice of the Spirit of God saying, "Yes, indeed, John. Blessed are the dead. Happy are they who die in the Lord." That is a confirmation of that statement, and it is made by the Spirit of God who goes on then to explain why the tribulation saints are in a happy state.

**Rest**

The Spirit says, "Blessed, yes, indeed, that." And He introduces the reason for their happiness, as did tribulation saints: "That they may rest." And wouldn't you know that God the Holy Spirit would use this word that we looked at in some detail in the previous passage, where it says, "The unbelievers have no rest day or night?" The Greek word is "anapauo." This word means "to cease." This is the word that describes what happened to the speaking of tongues in 70 A.D. in the New Testament, after God's purpose for speaking in foreign languages, and delivering messages from God in foreign languages, was completed, because the message of God was fully delivered, and the Scriptures were being written. So, all of a sudden, just one day, the curtain came down, and there were no more tongues. It just ceased. And it's the kind of thing that when you do a job, and finally you've finish the last piece of doing that project, and you sit down, and you have rest. You have peace. This word means "to get relief."

It is present tense, which means that when you get this rest in heaven, it's going to be there constantly. Interestingly, it is in the middle voice, which indicates that you personally are the beneficiary of coming into heaven and receiving this peace. And it is subjunctive, which means that it is a potential condition. It depends upon whether you're in Christ or not, as to whether you get peace. And this peace is from your labors. This word here tells us something about what kind of labors he's talking about. It is the Greek word "kopos." "Kopos" means "laborious toil." It means working in the things of God where you're just worn out, and you're just tired, and you're just blown and shattered. Now the Spirit of God comes through and carries us in the moment of our needs. And one of the things he provides is that great physical vitality and energy.

I remember years ago listening to Dr. Chafer in class, and he would talk about how, when he was on the road as an evangelist, the demands were very great, and the meetings were very draining, and the preparation was draining, especially when he'd go back to his hotel room, and he was writing the first premillennial systematic theology ever produced in the world. And he was saying that he would become so exhausted that he would have to face another meeting, and he would have to turn to God for the physical vitality. And he said, "And He never let me down. He'd give me that shot of adrenaline; of energy; and, of capacity far beyond the level of my age. He gave me what I needed to do the job." That's how He is. He doesn't call you to perform a mission without providing logistical grace. He gives you the means; He gives you the capacity; when you're walking with Him in that inner circle, He gives you the direction; and, He gives you the victory.

So, this tells us something about these believers. They have carried burdens under the persecution of the antichrist and the tribulation. They were not cowering. They were not standing around. They were not just hiding. They were also proclaiming that he's wrong and God is right. They were doing what the New Testament Christians did, which was unforgivable in the Roman Empire – that Christians had the audacity to say, "We can judge what the emperor says and what he does by a higher standard, the Bible. We have the Word of the Creator God."

In the tribulation, the believer at death is going to enjoy tremendous release from pressures of life, and enter into a position of rest in heaven. These believers have been active in God service. They never experienced rest in the tribulation. This very word "kopos" tells us that there was laborious toil. It was excruciating exertion. They will have been under attacks and under pressures of Satan's human agents, not the least of which, they'll be under the temptation to go along to get along. That is the same temptation that we face: Go along with what you know is not right, to get along.

The suffering of the believers in the tribulation will be the worst in all of human history, so that heavenly rest for them will be a welcomed status. And that's why the Holy Spirit says, "Yes, that's right. When you people get up to heaven, I want you know that you're going to have rest from these laborious burdens that you carry now." The faithful tribulation believer may experience painful martyrdom, but he will ultimately enter an eternal rest in heaven.

Furthermore, he not only comes in to rest, but God says, "I don't forget what you did. I will never forget your 'ergon.' I will never forget your works of service – the divine good production." Isn't that amazing? He says that their works; their deeds; and, their divine good service is going to follow them right into heaven. The deeds of the believer include their personal conduct, as per God's honor moral code. The deeds of the believers include their resistance to the antichrist and his attacks upon Jesus Christ. The reason they do this is because of what they are. There is no separation between what a person is and what he does. A carnal believer does one thing. A spiritual believer, who's in the inner circle, does something else. You do what you are. You can fake it for a while, but sooner or later you're going to slip. The mask is going to fall off, and everyone will see what you are by what you do.

**Rewards**

"Their works will follow them." The work and service of the tribulation saints will go with them in death into heaven. The divine good works of God's saints is rewarded in heaven by God the Father. This is true for us as believers. We know this is our destiny – that "God is not unmindful," the Scripture says, of our works of service and our works of love. Here, the tribulation believers are going to have something special in the way of reward for their faithfulness.

For us Christians, the position is 2 Corinthians 5:10 that we come under: "For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." The "good or bad" means whether it's divine good; or, whether it's bad human good. Human good is evil; but, divine good is good. And God can reward that.

1 Corinthians 3:8 spells this out in great detail: "Now he who plants and he who waters are one, but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor." Yes, it takes a lot of Christians to pull together to pull off a mission. Some do one thing, and some do another thing. It's like a person who is raising a crop: some are planting; some are watering; and, some are harvesting, but everybody gets rewarded according to what he did, and according to his performance.

Verse 14: If any man's work which he has built upon it (that is, upon his salvation in Christ) remains, he shall receive a reward." The sorry side of that is verse 15: "If any man's is burned up because it's human good (no good), he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, so as through fire."

So, this is no small thing that God promises rewards to those in the tribulation who are faithful, and it's a big thing for us in the Christian life. Believers who take their ease on earth will lose their rewards in heaven (1 Corinthians 3:15).

**Physical Death**

So, it would be fitting and proper right now to know the nature of physical death, especially in view of this declaration of how blessed it is to die in the Lord, and the happy destiny of those who go to heaven and find release, and relief, and exhilarating joy and happiness beyond our fondest dreams. It's important that we know how this ties in to the time when the body quits working: the nature of physical death.

1. **A Believer does not go to Hades or Purgatory**

At death, the believer does not go to Hades or to any kind of purgatory. Romans 8:1 says, "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ now. Hebrews 9:27-28 say that there's a time for a person to die, and then face divine judgment." It's just that simple. There's no intermediate way station along the way. Everyone is appointed to the divine judgment of the lake of fire. Do you understand that? At the point of your birth, you have already been scheduled for an appointment with the lake of fire. The issue is to get the appointment canceled. That happens when you accept Christ as personal Savior. When you believe the gospel message, then your appointment in the lake of fire is canceled. The only opportunity to escape the judgment of hell is while you are in the body.

All the cults and all the false religions want to give you a second chance after you die. That is not true. The Bible is very clear that only while you are still in the body can you make this decision – to have your appointment to hell canceled. Hell, or the lake of fire, as we have learned in the last couple of weeks, is a place of burning agony with no end to it ever.

1. **Present with the Lord**

At the physical death of a believer, the soul and spirit leave the body, and go immediately and consciously into the visible presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:8: "Absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." The soul and the spirit of a believer, and the soul of an unbeliever have perception. They are not unconscious. We know this from the historical record that we looked at in detail last time of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31. Whether you are saved or unsaved, you are conscious on the other side.

However, probably, the dead are not aware of what is taking place here on this earth. People always ask, "Can my dead relatives look down and see what I'm doing? I hope not." I don't think they are aware, or that you are visible to them. We have no such suggestion in Scripture. However, the dead can communicate with one another in heaven and in Hades, but they cannot communicate between heaven and Hades. Luke 16:26 makes that clear.

1. **The Great White Throne for Unbelievers**

At the physical death of unbelievers, the soul leaves the body, and it goes into a place called Torments in Hades to await the judgment of the great white throne. Luke 16:22-23 and Revelation 20:11-12 tell about the great white throne judgment. We are told in that revelation passage that heaven and earth flees from the great white throne, which tells us that the great white throne is out in space, and everything else gets out of the way. It is probably the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who sits on the throne exercising this judgment upon the unbelievers.

1. **The Body is Vacated**

The body is vacated at physical death, and it is dissolved into the chemicals from which it is made. In Genesis 3:19, Adam was told that he was made from the dust, and that's what he is going to become in time again, because of sin. The believer is going to receive a resurrection body that will be just like the one of Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:21). The believer's soul and spirit will therefore be reunited with a resurrected body, and this will be part of the first resurrection of Revelation 20:5. The bodies, however, of unbelievers will be reunited with their souls and their dead spirits as part of the second resurrection. Revelation 20:5 refers to "the rest of the dead," which are raised after the 1,000-year millennium.

1. **No More Sorrow, Pain, Tears, or Death for the Believer**

For the believer, death means no more sorrow; no more pain; no more tears; and, no more death (Revelation 21:4). The unbeliever is going to be in sorrow continually (Luke 16:24-25). The body of the unbeliever will join him in sorrow and pain of his soul after he is raised in the second resurrection, and he, in his body, will be thrown into the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41).

1. **A Dwelling Place in Heaven for Believers**

The Christian at death has a dwelling place in heaven. In John 14:1-3, Jesus tells us that He's going there, and He's preparing the special living quarters for us now.

1. **Eternal Inheritance of Salvation for Believers**

The Christian at death steps into his eternal inheritance of salvation, which is then fully experienced (1 Peter 1:4-5). We only partially experience our salvation now. At death, we enter into the full impact, and see the full glory of it.

1. **A Promotion for the Believer**

For the Christian death is a promotion. Philippians 1:21 indicates that we are promoted at death from earth to heaven. How the soul and spirit will leave your body is in the hands of the Lord. When you, as a Christian, will have your soul and spirit removed from your body is going to be determined by the Lord. The process of your dying, whether it will be long or short (whichever way), God will provide you sufficient grace to carry you through that event. When the dying is all over: long or short; sooner or later; or, however, you will end up promoted into the Lord's presence.

1. **The Believer Waits in the Perfect Place for his Body**

Death for the Christian means waiting in a perfect place for the resurrection of his body. Philippians 3:21 and 1 John 3:2 tell us that we are awaiting a body which will transform us completely into the image of Christ.

1. **God Always Takes the Believer's Life at the Right Time**

God always takes the believers life at the right time. He is omniscient, and He has a purpose for each life. Job 5:26 makes this very clear. When God takes you, that's the time to go. So, don't make stupid remarks by saying, "Oh, he was so young," or, "He was so old. He should have gone a long time ago." God takes you at the right time.

1. **God Provides Dying Grace**

God provides grace for the believer at the point of time. Here's a great doctrine. 2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you." This is dying grace. What does that do? Psalm 23:4 says that it removes the fear of death. Psalm 116:15 says that dying grace depends on who and what God is. Dying grace provides deliverance in extreme difficulty (Job 5:17-21). Dying grace promises to give inner peace in the process (Job 5:21-24). And dying grace, equally important, gives comfort to those who've been left behind (Job 5:25). Dying grace is one of the great realities of the Christian life.

1. **A Fuller Realization of Eternal Life for the Christian**

Death for the Christian means a fuller realization of the eternal life that he already possesses (2 Corinthians 4:18). You don't know how good it is.

1. **The Significance of the Death of Others**
	1. **The Shortness of a Lifetime**

It reminds all of us of the shortness of a lifetime (James 4:14 and Job 14:1). Life, at its greatest length, is very short. And you will discover that you move along, but you don't think that you're moving along. I recently made the comment to Mrs. Danish about some of the people on the world scene, or the people we associate with: "They're such kids." She reminded me: "They're not kids. We're not kids." But you don't know that. It's like the Tevye singing that song in Fiddler on the Roof about: "Where did the children go? How did they grow up here? Here, they're gone, and I didn't do anything. I have just sat here, and I haven't grown, and they are gone."

Well, the significance of death of others reminds us that life does move along. It reminds us of the futility of human profit and fame. Mark 8:36-37, Ecclesiastes 5:15, and Job 21:13 all remind us that you may be famous, and you may be rich, but when the time of death comes, it's all futile. If that's all you've got, you've got nothing.

* 1. **The Need for Salvation**

The death of others, furthermore, reminds us of the need to be prepared for our own death and for our own salvation. Act 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (get it done), and you will be saved."

* 1. **The Certainty of Judgment**

It reminds us of the certainty of judgment on those who are without salvation. If you've ever had to conduct a funeral, this is the tough one, when the person who's lying there is an ungodly, unsaved individual. That's why it's safe during funerals not to zero in too much on the individual, and not to laud the individual, and try to make a great deal of someone who all of us realize is not all that perfect, but to make a great deal of the one who is perfect, the Son of God, and to whom that person has gone to on that happy occasion, for the believer. But when you have an unbeliever, you've got no hope; you've got no comfort to give; and, you've got no promises you can make to the survivors. The death of others reminds us of the certainty of judgment on those without salvation (John 3:18, John 3:16, Hebrews 9:27). Every funeral is, therefore, a reminder of the universal rendezvous with death of all mankind. Psalm 89:48 and Ecclesiastes 9:5 points this out.

1. **God can Elect to Postpone One's Death**

God can elect to prolong a life and to perform to postpone one's death. Did you know that? He gives you your time. He puts into the computer what the appointed time is, and then God, because of reasons that are sovereign with Him, and your performance, and your impact, and your devotion, and your dedication, and your orientation to the Word of God, God says, "I need you around a little longer. I'm not going to check you out as per the original plan. Psalm 118:18 and Proverbs 14:27 speak about God extending a life span.

1. **Death is Compared to the Superior Strength of Love**

Death is used as a standard of comparison to the superior strength of love (Song of Solomon 8:6). Death is powerful, and we think that it's all powerful. And isn't it just like God (the God of grace) to say, "Well, it's pretty bad, but I'm going to wipe it out. The time is coming when every person has died, I'm going to bring back to life. So: so much for death. It'll be gone." But love is a powerful thing. Love carries you through. Love orients you. When you have the love of God that is based upon the Word of God, you are a powerful figure. You're nobody's patsy. You're nobody's fool. But you know how to fight the battle, and how to win, and you do it within the context of the power of love, which is far stronger than death itself.

1. **God Delivers from Imminent Death in His Sovereignty**

God delivers from imminent death in His sovereignty. Any soldier who ever has to go into combat loves to remember this principle. God says, "I will protect you from the sword. While hundreds die around you, I can keep you immune in the midst of battle." We do remember verses like Job 5:20, Psalm 33:19, Psalm 56:13, and Psalm 68:19-20. Every commanding officer should teach these verses to his troops, and alert them to the value of knowing doctrine, and being in temporal fellowship before you go into battle. God delivers from imminent death.

1. **Death can be Seen as a Nightmare or as a Joy**

Death is a nightmare to one who lacks divine viewpoint values and the standards in the mind, but it's a joy to the spiritually oriented. For example, it was a joy to Job in Job 19:23-27. Death was a joy to Joseph (Genesis 50:24-26). It was a joy to Moses (Deuteronomy 31:22-30, and chapters 32-33). All of these express Moses' joy. It was a joy to David (Psalm 23:4). Death was a joy to the apostle Paul (2 Timothy 4:6-8), because he understood the principle of entering rest. And it was a joy to Peter (2 Peter 1:12-15).

However, on the other hand, to those who are out of touch with spiritual reality, it was a nightmare, as it was to Saul (1 Samuel 24:4-7). It was a terror for him to die, and he was going to heaven, but he was so out of touch spiritually. Certainly, for the rich man, who was on his way to the lake of fire, it was no joy for him (Luke 16:19-31).

1. **Jesus Christ Brought Immortality to All**

The Lord Jesus Christ, through his own physical death, and triumph over it, has brought immortality to all. Because Christ has died and been raised to life, that tells us that a human being can be brought back to life and can spend eternity in heaven (2 Timothy 1:10). Christ has established the principle of the immortality of the human body.

1. **The Last Enemy to be Overcome**

The last enemy of mankind to be overcome is death (1 Corinthians 15:26). And the way that God is going to overcome death is to simply make it impossible to ever happen again. The saved and the unsaved say will be restored to their physical bodies alive, and death will be removed, because sin will be removed, and death will be impossible after that.

1. **Death is Sleep for the Body of the Believer**

The death of a Christian is described in terms of the body as asleep (1 Corinthians 15:51). A Christian sleeps, indicating that he's just going to wake up, and wake up in another place.

1. **Sorrow but not Hopelessness**

Finally, Christians do experience sorrow at the death of loved ones and of their friends, but not in the hopeless fashion of unbelievers and of the spiritually disoriented. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 spells it all out. So, when people die, you won't act like you were a pagan, and you won't try making a great deal over this person who has died. Have you gone to trouble to tell your family: "If I die, use the cheapest casket that they have, and try to get a discount? Find a used one if you can." I have that in my will: a used casket. And make sure that they understand that there is to be no public displaying of the body. Just have a private service. If they want to get together for a memorial service later, that is fine, but do it with no casket and no body. Nobody remembers you except that you were at the last picnic; the last band practice; the last ski slope; or, the last whatever. Life is where we are. Nobody has died. Everybody is still alive. That's where we are that is the difference.

Therefore, we Christians have to understand this, so that we're not acting like the world. If you've ever been at a funeral service where you have wailing and agony and hysteria, you'll know what I'm talking about. God is the God of life, and He extends it all. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. And He does not desire that anybody should perish forever in the lake of fire. Blessed are those who die in the Lord. It's really true.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1992

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