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The Death Of His Saints

By Terry Bennett

Here in this life we celebrate events like graduation from high school or college. We celebrate a promotion to a new job. In each of these, we look back at what has been accomplished, but we realize that the real focus of graduation or a job promotion is not really on the past. It is on the future – on what lies ahead.

It is the same with a funeral. We honor the past by remembering our loved one who has gone on. We share fond memories together. Some of these memories make us laugh while others may bring a tear. We will always have these memories. But we realize that a funeral is not the end but a new beginning.

At the funeral of a faithful Christian, we celebrate the graduation from this life. We celebrate the promotion to an eternity far better than anything we could ever imagine. Our loved one's 'school year' is over; his 'term paper' is done; there is nothing more that he can do to influence his 'final grade.' He has gone on to his reward. He has achieved his goal.

It seems that many in this life hesitate to think about death. It is often considered a morbid subject – a topic to be avoided. Far too many have a fear of death – perhaps because of a fear of the unknown – perhaps because of a fear of their impending judgment.

Yet for the faithful child of God, death is not at all something to be feared. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psa 116:15). Viewed from God's perspective, such physical death simply means that one of His children is finally coming home. In Philippians 1:21, 23, the apostle Paul expressed that when compared to this life, death is "gain", and it is far better to "depart and be with Christ." Can you picture Paul with a smile on his face as he thought about his own upcoming death? There was no fear but only a joyous anticipation of what awaited!

In Philippians 2:20-21, Paul spoke of eagerly waiting "for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body." The apostle John wrote, "... 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). The dead are removed from this world. There will be no more temptation, no more evil, no more pain, no more parting, no more tears. A blessed rest awaits the faithful of God. And we are confident in the assurance of resurrection (II Cor 5:1-8). We have faith that there is a home waiting in heaven – a magnificent home inhabited by the angels and the saints of old – a beautiful home centered around the throne of God where His glory provides the light.

For the faithful Christian, death is not something to be denied or feared. Death is something that should be considered precious and even longed for – for the blessings it brings! This is what we live our lives for. This is what we are working toward. May we ever give praise and glory to God who through His Son has freed us from the fear of death!

"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (I Thess 4:13-18).

Your Parents Can't Make You Go To Heaven

By Ted Clarke

One of the greatest miseries of being a child is being made to do things that a child does not want to do. Eating vegetables, brushing teeth, taking a bath, cleaning one's room, going to Aunt June's, going to school, attending worship and Bible study -- these all rate high on the list of things that many children and teens do not like to do at some time or another.

As children get a little older, they often can see the wisdom of brushing their teeth or taking a bath, and many like going to school, even if it is not because they see the value of a good education. But mom and dad still make them attend church, even after they have complained sufficiently to be exempted from visiting Aunt June. Why?

Some young people feel as though they have finally broken the stranglehold parents exercise over children, when they have removed themselves from parental power to make them "go to church." A number of older people have told me that the reason they do not attend church in their adult years is because their parents made them go when they were children. Most of us know that really is not the reason. The real reason is usually twofold. One, the young person was not made to see the need for attending worship or Bible study as he was growing up, or the child simply did not learn the lessons taught. Two, the young person has grown and has made a decision that he does not need God in his life. His interests are simply not served by religion. In the growing process, the wisdom of eating properly bathing, and brushing teeth made sense, but somehow God was never made as real or as sensitive as those other things? Why?

Well, growing up is more than just getting older and bigger. There is a maturing of the mind (a true sense of seeking for answers to the questions of "Where did I come from? Why am I here? What happens to me when I die?"). When we really grow up, there is soberness about life's purpose and death's destiny with those who are truly mature. Young people, it is not easy to force

yourselves to think about these things, but it is important that you do so!

As you develop and grow older, try to grow in wisdom, too. When you become a young adult, your parents cannot make you do many things they used to do. You may be happy about that, but your parents did what they thought was best for you (Hebrews 12:9-11). There is one final thing that your parents cannot make you do! They cannot make you go to heaven. As much as they would like to see you there, they cannot make you go! That is a decision you get to make. You do not have to go, if you do not want to go! Romans 14:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 says that "*each one of us will give an account of himself.*" Growing up is great! The adult life is a continuing education. There are tremendous and eternal consequences attached to the decisions you make as young adults! Use your freedom to make the right choices for yourselves.