

“Blessed Are The Dead Who Die in the Lord”

This article is being written two days following our being informed of the peaceable passing of our precious daughter, Connie Doss, after her long, courageous battle with a brain tumor. It is intended to portray the comfort which can minimize the grief one experiences upon learning of the departure of a loved one who has indeed died “*in the Lord.*”

*“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.*

The book of Revelation was penned by the apostle John who, at the time, was exiled on the “*island of Patmos,*” Rev. 1:9, which was located in the Aegean Sea, situated West of Asia, now known as Turkey. This book was written at a time when Christians were being greatly persecuted, a time when one risked his life if he openly confessed faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Satan and his allies, especially as it related to false religion and the Roman Government, were diligently trying to exterminate Christianity from off the face of the earth. Countless Christians were martyrs for the cause of Christ.

Seemingly, one might ask “what greater harm could be heaped upon a person than to take that person’s life?. After all, death is often called “the grim reaper.” In Job 18:14 Bildad the Shuhite referred to death as “*the king of terrors.*” At a very critical time in his life David said “*the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me. And horror has overwhelmed me,*” Psa. 55:4.

And thus it continues to be so regarded! Death is unavoidable! “*It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,*” Heb. 9:27. Unless the Lord comes first, each of us will die. Death does not discriminate; it happens to all; it will stalk us until we finally succumb to its greedy clutches. Each breath we take shortens the span between life and death. No wonder it is called “*the last enemy,*” I Cor. 15:26! No wonder it is called “*The king of terrors,*” Job 18:14!

But wait! Death does not have to be an “*enemy*”! Death does not have to be “*the king of terrors*”! To the contrary, death can be a friend! In fact, according to our text, Rev. 14:13, death can prove to be a blessing! Death, for those who are “*in the Lord,*” can prove to be “be the dark side of the brightest door ever opened!” Such was the case with regards to the ones under consideration in our opening text. So let us ponder this verse more closely.

“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me...” We will not seek to identify this particular “*voice,*” other than to say it was “*a voice from heaven.*” Such a “*voice*” was not to be ignored!

“Write.” The message this inspired apostle received was not to be kept to himself! He was told to “*write,*” to make known the message revealed by this “*voice.*”

Properly understood, inasmuch as the Bible was given “*by inspiration of God,*” 2 Tim. 3:16,” and is “*the word of God,*” Heb. 4:12, then the Bible itself constitutes a “*voice*” from heaven, a “*voice*” to which we should give earnest heed!

“***Blessed are the dead.***” “*Blessed,*” from *markios* (Greek), means “happy;” it is the word which prefaced the beatitudes recorded in Matt. 5:3-11. And it is the word which prefaced some seven beatitudes in Revelation, including our text. “*Blessed*” or “happy” can not describe that which is either unconscious or non-existent. Hence, death is not a termination of life, but it is as someone has described it, “an incident in living.” In a real sense, Christ has “*abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,*” 2 Tim. 1:10.

“***Who die in the Lord.***” Death is not a friend to the non-Christian. For such a person it remains “*the king of terrors.*” In fact, in the context of our opening text the apostle John referred to those who will “*drink of the wine of the wrath of God,*” and who will “*be tormented with fire and brimstone,*” and who shall have “*no rest for ever and ever,*” Rev. 14:10-11. Contextually, a great contrast is made regarding the **lost** of Rev. 14:10-11 and the “*saints*” of Rev. 14:12. In fact, the “*saints*” of Rev. 14:12 are identified as “*those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*” These are the “*blessed*” ones of Rev. 14:13. But death does not discriminate; it happens to all, to saints and sinners alike. But those who “*die in the Lord*” are “*blessed;*” they are happy! They have not ceased to exist; they have cause to celebrate!

“***Yes, says the Spirit.***” This refers to the Holy Spirit, not the spirit of John. What “*the Spirit*” reveals is “*truth,*” not error. Cf. John 16:13.

“***That they may rest from their labors...***” “***Labors***” in this verse is translated from *kopos* (Greek), which is defined as “toil resulting in weariness,” Vine (**Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words**). But how can one “*rest*” from his “*labors,*” if he has not labored, or diligently worked to personally serve the Lord and to “spread the borders of the kingdom?” Much labor in this world is for naught. For example, pity the poor farmer who has labored long and hard to grow a bountiful crop, and then, just before it is ready to harvest, it is completely destroyed by an unexpected hail storm! Both the labor and the expense has been in vain. But contrast this with those encouraging words of I Cor. 15:58: “*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!*” Isn’t it amazing: if one is “*in the Lord,*” and scripturally abounds in His “***work,***” he can **know** that his labors are “*not in vain.*” Such assurance can not be had with regards to “*labor*” in any other realm!

“***And their works follow them.***” Obviously “*the Spirit*” Who prompted John to pen this verse did not believe in salvation by faith only! Faithful Christians **work** for the Lord! But in their case, “*their works follow them!*” Think of the countless lives a faithful Christian touches while he lives for and serves the Lord. In some instances people in succeeding generations are favorably influenced by the life of a faithful Christian. Their children and their children’s children will be impacted for good. The ones whom they convert, and others who will be the converts of their converts will be impacted for good. Remember Abel? “*By faith*” he “*offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through*

which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead **still speaks**,” Heb. 11:4. Abel has been “dead” for millenniums; yet he “still speaks!” When a person dies he leaves behind all his material possessions, but his influences lives on. Isn’t it a wonderful thought to “**know**” that our labor “in the Lord” is “not in vain,” and that our “works do follow” us? On the other hand, think of the lingering and damaging influence of a deceased person who, in life, served the devil instead of the Lord! How sad!

Conclusion: Mindful of these truths, the apostle Paul confidently affirmed, saying, “*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,*” Phil. 1:21. Consequently as he faced martyrdom, which appeared to be very imminent, this peerless apostle exclaimed, saying, “*the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing,*” 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

Yes, “**Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!**” No longer are they tempted by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. No longer are they struggling for survival in a cruel world. No longer are they suffering from fatigue, pain, disappointment, and physical ailments in general. To the contrary, having died “**in the Lord,**” in a special sense they are now **with** the Lord! For them, **death** (which to others is “*the king of terrors*”) served as the gateway to eternal blessedness. Yes, “**blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!**” Friend, are **you** “in the Lord?”

—Bobby Witherington