

AFTER WE LEAVE THIS WORLD

A well known author once wrote these words: “the path of glory leads but to the grave.” Then a more famous author once wrote a letter in which he stated that the path of special suffering leads to glory beyond the grave. They call him Saint Peter.

The path of most of the people who have gone on to the grave was anything but a path of glory. Only God knows how many people have left this world and have gone to the grave. But men have guessed the number to be over twenty billion. Of this number more than ten billion have been uncivilized, unevangelized and uneducated heathen. Most of them have died in poverty, and misery and degradation.

Perhaps you have read the first Book in the Bible, the Book of Genesis. In the first chapters of that first Book we read of a wonderful man, a man made in the image and likeness of God. That wonderful man was in a wonderful Paradise, communing with Almighty God. Then something happened. What was that something? Three letters tell us. S - I - N. Sin has played havoc with the human race. “The wages of sin is death.” As we come to the last chapter of that first Book we read the biography of another wonderful man. His name was Joseph. This is the way the chapter ends—“So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.”

What a contrast! Adam in the image of God in Paradise. Joseph in a coffin in Egypt. If Adam had not sinned, Joseph would not have been in Egypt or in a coffin. Yes, Joseph was about as fine and noble as any man who ever lived on this earth. But he went to the grave. “To the grave.” Not a very happy thought, but the funeral cars are constantly passing us on the way to the cemetery to keep us reminded that we, too, are on the way to the cemetery, whether we are numbered among the noble or just the ordinary.

There was another very noble man, a great king, in whose life there was much glory. But the time of his departure arrived. He said, “I go the way of all the earth.” “So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David. (I Kings 2:10). Let’s read the account in I Kings 2:1 to 3—“Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments and His testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.”

More than one thousand years after that great king died another great and noble man died; perhaps, with one exception, measured by true values, the greatest man who ever lived on this earth. Note his farewell message: “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing.” (II Timothy 4:6 to 8).

Where is this great man now? Is Paul forever dead? It was Paul who wrote—“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” (I Timothy 4:8).

But note again his words in I Corinthians 15:19—“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

As we think of David, and Paul, and our loved ones, who have gone to their graves, the old questions of Job are ever new: “Man giveth up the ghost and where is he?” “If a man die, shall he live again?” Who has the answer?

The first question, “Where are the dead?” causes us to think of these strange words, recorded in Ecclesiastes 12:3 to 7—“In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, And the door shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets; Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit return unto God Who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.”

Let us read with these words the story of a great Christian hero, Stephen. “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge, And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” (Acts 7:59 and 60).

Paul might well have thought of Stephen when he wrote II Corinthians 5:8 and 9—“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.”

There were times when Paul wanted to depart to be with Christ (Philippians 1:22 and 23). That meant that his path led to glory beyond the grave. Therefore he said: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18). “When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” (Colossians 3:4).

Now let us compare the words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was here on earth, with that wonderful truth He later revealed to Paul.

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” John 5:28 and 29.

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” I Corinthians 15:51 and 52.

The grave is simply a stop on the way. We are all either on the way to eternal glory or to eternal perdition. The wonderful, startling news is, that some are going to eternal glory without going to the grave. Think of the joy of the redeemed ones who will be raptured in the twinkling of an eye. No funeral. No grave. But glory eternal.

Did Moses make a mistake in his choice? “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” Hebrews 11:25 and 26.

Moses was not near-sighted. He looked far beyond the pleasures of sins and the treasures of earth. He believed the truth of I John 2¹⁶ and 17—“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

Every life is a sacrifice. The sinner sacrifices heaven and eternal glory for fun, fortune or fame. The Christian sacrifices the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life for an eternity with Christ in glory.

Yes, the Christian is going to heaven to share the glory of Christ, because of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

I Peter 3:18 “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:”

Romans 5:8 and 9 “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

Ephesians 2:13 “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

Acts 4:12 “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Can you imagine that any person living in the United States does not know what is beyond the grave; or that any one in this country does not how to escape eternal perdition?

Hear these solemn words in John 3:36—“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on Him.”

Hear again Hebrews 10:39—“But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

The time we spend this side of the grave is a nothing compared with the unending eternity after we leave this world. But we must decide on our eternal destiny and destination before we die or before Christ comes. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Hebrews 9:27

After death and the grave, what? Judgment—the wrath of God. Not probation or another chance. You can settle the matter of your eternal destiny right now. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:8 to 10.

Be wise and receive Christ right here and now.

WHEN I SAY GOODBYE

When to this world I say goodbye,
Whether Christ shall come or I shall die;
I shall not fear my future state,
Nor yet resign my soul to fate;
‘Tis neither boast no carnal pride
Nor natural worth I have inside;
My trust is not in human creeds,
Nor in my good religious deeds.

If man, by works, could heaven gain,
Then ‘tis true, Christ died in vain.
There was no power on earth could save,
Nor offer hope beyond the grave.

Salvation is from heaven above;
God's book declares that God is love.
God loved the world and sent His Son
To die for sinners, for every one.

Christ tasted death for every man:
It was God's own redemption plan.
On Calvary's cross the debt was paid,
For there on Christ our sins were laid.
In death the Saviour bowed His head,
There His precious blood was shed.
God has for sin no other cure.
By Christ's shed blood the way is sure.

When Christ had put our sin away,
In Joseph's tomb His body lay.
But on the third day Christ arose
To conquer thereby all His foes;
Then He ascended through the sky
To take His Father's throne on high.
Now in the Father's presence there
Unceasing is the Saviour's prayer.

Still He prays, "All Thine are Mine,"
Forever kept by power Divine.
Christ promised to prepare a place
For all who will receive His grace.
Some day the age of grace will end;
The Lord from heaven shall descend.
The dead in Christ will hear the shout,
And from their graves they will come out.

The living saints shall with them rise,
And meet the Saviour in the skies;
And we shall then His glory see,
And like the Saviour we shall be.
When we reach our heavenly home,
Throughout the ages yet to come,
God's grace in Christ the saints shall know,
For God has promised this to show.

Eternal life, God's gift, is free
'Tis all by grace for you and me.
So in God's Word I rest my case,
Trusting His unfailing grace.
God cannot lie, His word is sure;

And in His Son I am secure,
Because Christ's work has satisfied,
And by that work I'm justified.

God has pardoned every sin;
My hope of glory, Christ within.
I am prepared my God to meet,
For in His Son I am complete,
And sealed unto redemption day.
So if by death, or I'm caught away.
I shall not fear my future state,
But, loving Christ, I'll serve and wait.

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