

## Finding Life in Death

~Earl Ray Hursh

Death is cold, cruel, and at times even brutal. It seldom touches our families at a time that we feel is convenient or appropriate. Sudden deaths or slow, painful deaths are both traumatic. They leave the families feeling devastated. But that is death; it is not by nature a pleasant part of life.

In the middle of a beautiful place and experience, Adam and Eve came to the stark realization that death was cruel. They discovered by experience that God's Word stood final: "*in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*" That day they were driven out of the Garden of Eden and experienced spiritual death (separated from a communing relationship with God). It was also the onset of physical death (separation from the body). And so today, thousands of years later, we are experiencing the touch of death because of sin. "So death passed upon all men, for all have sinned." Separation through death is a scar resulting from the fall of man.

But there is hope in all this! There is life for those who are walking through the valley of the shadow of death – to those who are feeling the effects of death passing close to them. Some know the feeling of having this happen in their family; a child, a parent, a spouse, a close friend. This can leave us with negative feelings of hopeless despair and despondency. But God's desire for us is to look up and trust Him. He wants to walk with us through these trying moments.

How do we find life when we are surrounded by death? First of all, we need to recognize the Lord's mercies. "*It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.*" It is in times like this that the child of God recognizes that the Lord is near, and becomes more sensitive to the mercies of God. His caring concern about our grief and adjustment brings us comfort. It is also a reminder to live circumspectly. God in His mercy to the living gives ample reminders to prepare for the finality of death. The pain of death caused the Psalmist to call out to God. "*The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul*" (Psa 116:3-5). We are made aware of the need to reach out beyond ourselves. By clinging to and abiding in Him, we choose Him as our source of strength.

Further, we need to claim the promises of God in a new way. "*Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" "*Fear thou not; for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee...*" "*When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee...*" "*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee...*" These are the words that will bring life to the weary, heavy-hearted soul. This is what will endure in the days and years ahead. At our funerals it is the promises of God that should be the predominant expression of encouragement.

We also need to rest in the will of God. Restfulness and peace will be the result to the soul that claims these promises and trusts the sovereign hand of God. We need to accept that it was God that reached down and touched our hearts and changed our perspective. The mind of faith finds rest in that knowledge, and the heart of commitment expresses peace with the assurance of the presence of God. "*Thou God seest me,*" was the expression of Hannah and needs to be the heart cry of us as

well. The “what-ifs” and “if-onlys” are replaced with the resignation that this was the will of God.

Finally, we must believe in the hope of the future. The living hope of the future is another stimulus to the child of God facing the pain of parting. This is not the end of the road; there is a visible future (through the eye of faith). Reuniting with our loved ones gone before us is the living hope and expectation for every saint while yet on earth. This hope gives us incentive to maintain a pure walk and an upward look that will inspire others as well as ourselves.

~Middleburg, PA  
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