

A Preacher's Perspective

By Keith Greer

One of the jobs that comes with being a preacher is conducting funerals. While working in that capacity in Las Vegas, it was my sad duty to become acquainted with that part of the work. Personally, I have tried to be of comfort to the grieving family, and say the right words during the service. I will leave it to others to decide how well I've conducted these services. Words alone cannot comfort the family's grief and sorrow, but hopefully in time these words will come to have more meaning to them.

When I started preaching the gospel, I well understood that there would be times such as these. Yet, until the time came to deal with the subject, I did not have a clue how I would react. What words are most fitting? How personal should I be? Do I preach a sermon?

All these, along with many other thoughts, raced through my mind. DEATH IS A RUDE AWAKENING TO THE REALITY OF THE BREVITY OF LIFE! Job 14:1; James 4:14. First, Hebrews 9:27 clearly teaches us that all die and then face the judgment. Since every child of God knows this, we certainly make the proper preparation to meet this appointment. Right? This is wishful thinking on my part I'm sure, but should not each of us seriously consider this matter in our lives?

Second, Luke 12:16-20 teaches us the folly of thinking about tomorrow when we have no guarantee of tomorrow. Death comes to many who are very young and to many others who are later on down life's road. Whether the death of a loved one is expected or not, we are never fully ready to "let them go."

Consider for a moment this serious question, "After death, what then?" I was talking with an atheist one day, and he said, "I do not believe what you teach concerning death." So I asked him what he believed about death. He replied, "For one thing, I believe death ends all." I explained to him that I also agreed to that. "What! You believe death ends all things, and you profess to believe in God and be a preacher of the gospel." Then I calmly answered, "I certainly do believe in God, and death does end

most things. Death ends all the joy you had on earth; death ends all your plans and projects; all your ambitions and friendships; death ends all the gospel sermons you will ever hear, and death ultimately ends your chances to repent and turn to God. If this be your lot, you will be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Don't you agree with these assessments?" He did not have an answer!

Death is so final. I have no second chances, no time to say all of those things I wanted to express to others, but never got around to. Turning to the scriptures again, the answers of comfort and peace are clearly given for us to understand and ponder. Hebrews 4:9; John 14:1-3; Philippians 1:21-23; 2 Timothy 4:6-8; Revelation 21: 4-8; Read very soberly!

Looking back to the funerals I've had to conduct, one thing made it a whole lot easier. All died with hope! For those who were left behind that knowledge is truly very comforting. Yet, what if they had been unfaithful? An alien sinner? Sadly, I understand somewhere down the line I may have some like this in the future. Someday, I will have to stand over the casket of one who has never known God, or has disobeyed Him during his life on earth. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 and Hebrews 10:29-31 describes the punishment of those who are not obedient to the gospel of Christ. I shudder to think about those who die with NO HOPE!

It is a terrible risk not to be prepared because we have such a wonderful home to look forward to. "...Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:3,4. This is OUR HOPE!

I would like to add just a few personal comments to the things you've just read. Many people fail to realize the burden of death is a very trying experience for those we leave behind. Now, add to that grief the fact that they knew they were not ready to meet their Lord. What comfort can I give to their family during this time of pain and anguish of losing a loved one? Despite popular belief, I cannot "preach him into heaven." One of the true comforts to your loved ones {Ask anyone who has lost someone close} is that

death is not such a terrible thing when the soul has made the proper preparations! I've talked to many who are dying and so many times they are more worried with those they will leave behind.

Let me give you something to ponder over in your mind. If you are unprepared at your death to meet the Lord in judgment, you have left your loved ones with much anguish of heart. Please do not do this to them, and most importantly, don't do this to yourself! I might add, you make my job a lot easier too. Please remember you are the only one who can make these arrangements for your soul. Have you made these preparations? If not, do not delay another minute!