

# A CHRISTIAN COPING WITH DEATH

By Keith Greer

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment," {Hebrews 9:27} Being a gospel preacher, I well understand the meaning of this passage. One of the things which comes with preaching is doing funerals. During the few years I've been here, I have done several funerals. Death comes to all men, some sooner than others. No matter how far we have come in the field of science and medicine, death will still be experienced by all of us.

There are two kinds of funerals: for those who are **prepared** and for the ones who are **unprepared**. Understand I'm not talking about the arrangements of services. My preference of course is for those who are prepared. "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." (Revelation 14:13)

To be perfectly honest, even for those who are prepared, it is pretty difficult to preach at a funeral when I have grown to know and love them. During a two week period, at the last congregation I labored with, the church there lost two dear ladies. One had a funeral out of state, the other I conducted. Honestly, in many ways I still miss them both.

Yet, I understand that these two sisters lived their lives to die with hope. Is this not what we all desire for ourselves? One's own selfishness wants them to stay here, when their death is gain! "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain!" (Philippians 1:21)

What do I say to the family to comfort them in those difficult hours? How can I lessen the tears and the grief for them? How do they replace the void in their lives? Difficult questions indeed and the answers are not easy to come by. Help is given turning to the word of God.

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:1-3)

"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." (1Thessalonians 4:13,14)

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and 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 Timothy 4:6-8)

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." (Psalms 23:4)

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. " (Revelation 21:4)

Yes, there is much comfort in the death of the righteous. Sadly, most die unprepared to meet God. What can I say to their families? How do I comfort them? All I can do is preach to the living, and encourage them to do better in preparing for this divine appointment!

Sadly, I've listened to many a person "being preached into heaven." It can never cease to amaze me that such men, who have people's attention for 20 or 30 minutes about eternal things, would take such an opportunity and mislead them. Tell them the truth so they truly are prepared! \*\*\*