

A Glimpse of Heaven

For all living beings on earth, there is a time to be born and a time to die.¹ We must always remember that God never chose death for us; we chose death for ourselves through our unbelief. We placed our faith in creation, rather than in almighty God, the Creator, and in doing so we brought about the corruption of sin and the curse of death on all the created order.² Scripture teaches, “Do not invite death by the error of your life, or bring on destruction by the works of your hands; because God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living.”³

It is not God who makes us suffer, nor is it God who makes us sick, and it is certainly not God who is responsible for our death.⁴ On the contrary, God has completed all the work necessary to give us life, health, and prosperity, and give us all those things in abundance. He accomplished all of this by sending His Son, Jesus of Nazareth to the cross to win our redemption and give us eternal life clothed in his righteousness.⁵ We are therefore, free from the power of sin and death.⁶

Due to our confusion and lack of understanding, we often blame God for the very problems in life that He in His mighty wisdom has done everything necessary to solve.⁷ Jesus prays, “Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven”;⁸ therefore we know all that we see happening here on earth is not according to God’s will.⁹ One day we will understand, and the confusion will subside, and the reality of God’s mercy and His marvelous grace will penetrate our very hearts and souls, and we will then see clearly that God is on our side and God is here to help us and God loves us and God will never leave us nor forsake us.¹⁰

For those of us who remain, just as it was with «FirstName», we trust in the Lord with all our heart and we do not trust our own understanding; rather, we lean on him and it is he who directs our paths.¹¹ This is how we face death, recognizing that dying is merely a passing from this life into the next.¹² We know that Jesus is our Lord and our Redeemer and He has gone to prepare a place for us; a place more beautiful than we can imagine.¹³ We know we are going to a place where God’s will is done.¹⁴

While the body of «FirstName» is asleep in the Lord awaiting the resurrection promised

¹ Ecclesiastes 3:2

² Romans 8:19-22

³ Wisdom 1:12-13

⁴ James 1:16-18

⁵ Romans 3:21-22 (Righteousness by faith in Christ); Deuteronomy 28:1-14 (Blessings for the righteous, those who keep the Law by faith in Christ)

⁶ Romans 8:1-2

⁷ Luke 23:34

⁸ Matthew 6:10

⁹ 1 John 5:19

¹⁰ Job 42:1-6; Hebrews 13:5

¹¹ Proverbs 3:5-6

¹² 2 Corinthians 5:1-6; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; 1 John 3:14

¹³ John 14:2-3; Revelation 21:9-27

¹⁴ Matthew 6:10

when Christ returns,¹⁵ «HisHer» spirit is with the Lord Jesus free from the shackles of sin and the tired worn-out body «HeShe» left behind.¹⁶ St. Paul writes to the Corinthians paraphrasing the prophet Isaiah: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”¹⁷ And so we gather here to celebrate the life of «FirstName» and to thank God for «HisHer» life. God gives us life on earth and God carries us from this life into the next.¹⁸ True death is only for those who refuse God’s grace and have hardened their hearts against Him.¹⁹ But for those who choose to live in fellowship with Christ, the death we know has no sting, no power, and no hold on us.²⁰ As surely as Jesus rose from the dead and ascended after forty days to be seated at the right-hand of God the Father where he prays for each of us, we too will be resurrected with Him and join Him to live forever; to never die another death.²¹

It is natural and it is normal for us to grieve and be sorrowful at the passing of our «BrotherSister», but «HeShe» is not gone forever, just gone from our presence. We remain in now what seems to us a strange place for we are not of this world; the reality is we are merely passing through.²² Our job is to be witnesses for Jesus Christ sharing with others in this strange world our testimony of what Jesus has done for us.²³ One day not too far off, we will all meet once again at the feet of Jesus and we will praise Him and reside with Him forever. At just the right time, we will find friends, relatives, parents and grandparents, even spouses and children that have gone before us. There will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more pain, no more sin, but only life and joy and health and righteousness.²⁴

If I make it sound like life after life on earth is greater than life on earth, maybe that is because for the believer who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and believes in his or her heart that God raised Him from the dead, it is.²⁵ The only thing that causes us any concern is that none of us have been to Heaven and so none of us can tell anyone else what it is like.²⁶ We like to know something about our destination before we get there. God tells us all we need to know, but we must listen to Him and believe in His Son, Jesus. In so doing, we inherit eternal life.²⁷ So consider this: maybe we have received a glimpse of heaven if we stop and think about it.

We receive a glimpse of Heaven when we witness the love and commitment the body of Christ has for one another and the way in which we love and care for others in times of need.

¹⁵ 1 Thessalonians 4:14

¹⁶ Revelation 7:9

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:9

¹⁸ Genesis 2:14; Psalm 36:9

¹⁹ 2 Peter 2:4-9

²⁰ John 5:24; 1 Corinthians 15:55

²¹ Acts 1:3-9; Hebrews 7:25

²² 1 Thessalonians 5:10; John 17:16; James 4:4

²³ Acts 1:8

²⁴ Revelation 21:1-7

²⁵ Romans 10:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:19

²⁶ John 3:13, but Jesus said these words before his own death and resurrection which ushered in the New Covenant and made possible the resurrection of the dead and promise of eternal life. There are rare cases of persons going to heaven and returning to life on earth; or, having some near-death experience whereby they experienced heaven (in some cases hell) or had visions of heaven. For example: Heaven is for Real.

²⁷ Genesis 3:1-7; John 3:16

We get a glimpse of Heaven when we reach out to help those less fortunate and in doing so, share with others the good news God loves them. We get a glimpse of Heaven when we worship and join the whole communion of saints at the Lord's Table. We receive a glimpse of Heaven when we experience the presence of God and see the gifts of the Spirit working among God's people.

But our experience is not based in community alone; we get a glimpse of heaven, often times more than just a glimpse, when we know the presence of Christ in our individual lives through personal relationship with Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit. We get a glimpse of Heaven when we allow our spirits, made alive in Christ, to pray and intercede for us with those wordless groans from our inner spirit.²⁸

It has been said, and I agree, that if only one person ever in the history of the entire world among all the people living and dead accepted the forgiveness God gives through His Son, Jesus Christ, Jesus would have still given his life just for that one person.²⁹ We receive a glimpse of heaven when we contemplate such love as this from God knowing we do not deserve it; if we deserve anything, it would be retribution and God's wrath.³⁰ Today we celebrate the fact that Jesus died on the cross for «FirstName». He did the same for you and for me.³¹

Christians move from earthly life to eternal life – there is no such thing as death for those who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul writes to the Philippians, “For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me.”³²

You see, what we perceive as death is really the door to true life in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is why death has no power and why we can say with assurance, the grave is not our final destination. What we see and what we hear, we see and hear with our eyes and ears; but the things of God are beyond our human senses and beyond our human understanding. Faith is belief in God's Word regardless of what we think or how we feel, no matter what we see or hear. We are a people of faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God.³³

Grace and peace be to each of you as you mourn the passing of our dear «BrotherSister» in the Lord. My personal prayer for each of you is that your faith is built up by this experience. I long for you to understand, as the apostle Paul understood, that eternity with Christ is a reality.³⁴ Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and He has the final word in all matters concerning those who put their trust in Him.³⁵ We are only asked to persevere; to remain faithful, and the Crown of Life the Lord has promised will be ours – a gift from God to

²⁸ Romans 8:11, 26

²⁹ Genesis 18:22-33

³⁰ 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

³¹ 1 John 2:2

³² Philippians 1:20-24

³³ 2 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:6

³⁴ 2 Corinthians 12:2

³⁵ John 14:6; Revelation 1:17-18

those who trust Him.³⁶

I believe with all my heart that if «FirstName» could speak to us right now, «HeShe» would agree the place to which we are going is far better than the place in which we find ourselves in this present life. And for that, we praise God for life on earth, and praise God for life everlasting.

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

³⁶ James 1:12