

Northeast Church of Christ

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From the Pen of Paul: *The Final Goodbye*

THERE ARE MANY SAD DAYS IN A MAN'S lifetime. In fact, Job spoke of this very fact when he said, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). Man faces bleak, sad times due to sickness, failure, loneliness and death. It is also a sad time when we have to say "good-bye" to our friends and loved ones. This may be due to moving away, going into the military, or just going in opposite directions. It is especially difficult to say "goodbye" to our loved ones as they pass from their earthly existence into the other realm. I heard the story of a man, who knew that he was on his deathbed and that he had only a short time to live; he said, "Please call in all of my relatives and close friends; I want to give all of them my final goodbye."

That story is sad; "goodbyes" are always sad. However, the final "good-bye" is even more sad because it is permanent, at least in the physical sense. But, it gets worse when you consider the spiritual sense; there are a number of final "goodbyes" a man makes if he dies outside of Christ. If one dies outside of Christ, he will be saying a final "goodbye" to:

HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY:

All spiritual blessings are had only "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Peter even asked the question, "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God" (I Pet. 4:17b)? Paul answered Peter's inquiry when he stated, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (II Thess. 1:7-9).

We read in Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." And again, "behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:1b). This same fact is stressed by the Hebrew writer in Hebrews 3:7-15. What is the sum of these Scriptures? There is no hope for those who die outside of Christ. There are no "second-chance" opportunities after death. In the words of an old song, "It's now or never."

LIGHT:

Jesus describes the fate of the "unprofitable servant" as being cast into "outer darkness" (Matt. 25:30). "Outer darkness is an expression which denotes the blackness of darkness" (H. Leo Boles—Jude 13; II Pet. 2:17). The "outer darkness" into which the unprofitable servant was cast is put in contrast with the "joy of the Lord" into which the faithful servant entered (Matt. 25:21). This will be darkness in a horrible place for the same verse also mentions that "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Heaven's light will be "the glory of God" (Rev. 21:23; 22:5). But since the punishment of the lost includes being banished from the presence of the Lord (II Thess. 1:9), there will be no light there only "outer darkness." So, when one dies outside of Jesus Christ, he has said his final "goodbye" to light!

COOLNESS AND COMFORT:

The destiny of the lost is also said to be "a furnace of fire" (Matt. 13:42), a "lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8) and "a lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15). We have been talking about the muggy, hot days we are having where the temperatures are in the mid to upper 90s. But we also have air-conditioned cars, houses, and even stores, and other gathering

“Since you say the Holy Spirit is no longer working today, please tell us how you know this.”

I have never said the Holy Spirit is not working today. The Holy Spirit is indeed working today. He is making intercession for the Christian (Rom. 8:26). He strengthens the Christian in connection with the Word of God (Eph. 3:16). The Holy Spirit is given when one obeys the Lord in water baptism (Acts. 2:38).

It must be remembered that there are varying gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Bible. Jesus had the gift of the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34). The apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5). There were nine spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit given by the laying on of the apostles' hands (I Cor. 12; Acts 8:17-18). The Christian receives the gift of the Holy Spirit when he obeys the gospel (Acts 2:38).

We do not have to concern ourselves with the gift of the Holy Spirit without measure, since Christ was the only one to have such. The apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit and they could raise the dead and do other miracles. This cannot be done today, therefore, the baptism of the Holy Spirit no longer exists. Not only is this true, but we do not have the twelve apostles of Christ with us today. Since the gifts of I Corinthians 12 were given by the laying on of the apostles' hands, and since we no longer have the twelve apostles with us, we may conclude that these special gifts no longer exist. We

only have the one remaining and this is the gift of the Holy Spirit of Acts 2:38.

The common mistake made today is that of thinking every time the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit it is speaking of the same measure of the Spirit and this is just not true. The context declares the measure of the Holy Spirit as well as those who received the Holy Spirit.

Many people think the Holy Spirit is like the fog or smoke. They think the work of the Holy Spirit is mysterious and is closely connected with the modern day concept of a ghost. But, we must remember that the Holy Spirit is one of the Godhead three. He is in the God family. The Bible always alludes to the Holy Spirit as “He” (John 16:13). We are to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

The Holy Spirit is co-existent and co-eternal with God. The Godhead three are clearly seen at the baptism of Christ. Christ the Son was being baptized and after His baptism the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and God spoke saying that Christ was His Son (Matt. 3:11-17). The Holy Spirit was with God in the beginning (Gen. 1:2). Let us remember that the Holy Spirit is not “it” but “He” and “Him” in the Bible. The Holy Spirit is a personality just as Christ and God are personalities.

—*Malcolm L. Hill*

places. Our scorching days are no comparison to the "lake of fire."

As far as comfort goes, the Bible teaches that there will be weeping in hell, along with gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:30). When the rich man of Luke 16 "lift up his eyes" following his death and burial, he asked for relief stating "for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:23-24). This request for just "the tip of his finger in water" to "cool my tongue" was turned down with this statement by Abraham, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (Luke 16:25). When he died outside of Christ, this rich man had bid his final "good-bye" to coolness and to comfort. The comforts he enjoyed in life were gone forever!

BEAUTY:

Hell will be filled with ugliness. Read Revelation 21:8 and see if there is anything beautiful about hell's repulsive population. Those lost will never again see the beauty of a rose, a sunset, a smile, or a baby's face! We sing, "How Beautiful Heaven Must Be!" but one who dies outside of Christ has said his final "goodbye" to beauty; he will be surrounded by ugliness forever!

It's a pretty bleak picture isn't it? There are no last "goodbyes" in the Christian's vocabulary; at least, not to these good things. Why not make preparation now, today, while you can? Heaven will surely be worth it all!

—Paul M. Wilmoth