

The Shock of Death

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There seems to be certain incidents in life that shock us back to reality. The death of a sister in Christ, Catherine, a few years back was for me one of those incidents. The first time I met and visited Catherine was in the hospital. My daughter Lisa went with me, and she enjoyed the visit immensely. Wednesday late afternoon before she died, I had visited and prayed with her. She was doing so fine despite the complications that had set in. We were planning to visit her again the first of the next week. Lisa wanted to go and even bought some flowers to give to her.

It was Sunday morning when the shock came. That morning was normal until someone said that Catherine had died suddenly on Thursday morning. It hit me hard, but even harder did it hit Lisa. It will be a long time before I forget those sad eyes of Lisa as she turned to me and asked, “Did you hear that Catherine died?” My reply was quick and with a warm embrace I said I had. We had talked about death on several occasions before, and I was confident that she understood although that does not take away that feeling of losing someone. It is a feeling that each of us at one time or another must deal with.

Death Is A Reality

There are many people who go through life trying to escape the pain of death, but every person must deal with it. The Bible offers answers to the problems of life and death. We know death is real because of experience and because the Bible tells us so. The Hebrews writer said, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). If we look at the evidence, we will realize how fleeting life really is. In Psalms 103:15-18, the Psalmist contrasted the temporal nature of man with God’s eternal nature. He declared, “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.” James illustrated the fleeting nature of physical life by a vapor. He stated, “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14).

Death Must Be Prepared For

Life is actually a preparation for death. Jesus said, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matthew 6:19-20). The things of this world will be consumed in a fervent heat (2 Peter 3:10), but we will live on — “they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:29). Since we will live on, we must prepare for death. We prepare for death by obeying God in becoming a Christian and by obeying Him in faithful living. We become a Christian by obedience to the plan of salvation. God has made the way for us by sending forth His Son to pay the price of sin. We live faithfully by worshiping and serving the creator according to God’s word with the motivation of love and faith. When we come to the realization that life is a preparation for death, we will have the proper outlook on life and on death.

Death Offers Hope

To some that statement is a shock. Most people feel there is no hope in death, but notice what the apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:13. “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” Unlike the world which has no hope, the Christian has a lively hope — a hope built upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). In 1 Corinthians 15:55-57, the apostle Paul again enlightens us as to death. In this passage, Paul teaches us that there is victory over death of which the faithful will be a part. He said, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is through death that we gain the victory! Heaven is not ours until we pass from life unto death. We cannot be with the Lord until we are raised, and we cannot be raised until we die. Therefore, death offers hope because through death we gain life eternal. It is with these thoughts Paul said, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

Death sometimes catches us off guard and shocks us back to reality as to what is really important. We can all be thankful that certain incidents happen in life that helps us to keep a proper perspective on life and on death. These incidents helps us deal with the cold reality of death. Yes, they come as a shock, but with God’s help and instruction, we are able to deal with them trusting in Him to carry us through.