

The Ultimate Healing



David Wilkerson October 1, 1979

Resurrection from the dead is the "ultimate healing." I tried to share that glorious truth with the grieving parents of a five-year-old boy who had died just hours before of leukemia. They had begged God for the healing of their dear child. The whole church prayed earnestly. Friends had prophesied: "He will not die; he will be healed." One week prior to the little boy's death, the heartbroken father picked the fevered child up in his arms and walked him around the room. "God, I'll not give him up. Your promises are true. My faith has never faltered. More than two or three have agreed in Your name that he should be healed. I confess it now, and I claim it." In spite of everything, the child died.

I was there when that child was laid out in a tiny casket. I looked with horror on all those sad faces of Christian friends who had gathered to mourn in death. The parents were in a state of shock. Everybody was afraid to speak out what they were thinking. I know the church people were thinking it, and the pastor acted like he was thinking it. I know the parents were certainly thinking it. And just what was this unthinkable thought gripping their minds? Simply this -- "God did not answer prayer! Someone goofed! Someone stood in the way of God's healing power! Someone is responsible for this child's death. A grudge, a hidden motive, or a secret sin. Someone or something hindered the healing."

It was there and then this glorious truth dawned on me, and I took the parents aside and briefly unburdened my heart. "Don't question God," I said. "Yours prayers have all been answered. God gave your son the ultimate healing. That little, fevered, diseased body has been abandoned, and Ricky is right now clothed in his perfect, painless body. Ricky has been healed! God did exceedingly above all you could ask or think of Him. He is alive and well -- all that has changed is his body and his location."

Those parents turned on me with anger. They were bitter and confused, and they left the graveside to enter a bleak five-year period of doubts, questions, guilt, and self-examination. During that time, they would hardly speak to me. But God, in His mercy, always breaks through to sincere hearts. One day, while in prayer, the Holy Spirit came upon that grieving mother, reminding her of my message. She began praising the Lord, saying, "Ricky was healed. God did answer our prayers. Lord forgive our doubts. Ricky is right now alive and well and enjoying his healing."

I treasure the moment we stood together, arms entwined, thanking the Lord for such comfort. Ricky's father confessed, "Dave, we were so angry with you. We thought you were heartless, suggesting our son, who had just died, had been healed. Now we understand. We were so selfish, we could not understand what was best for our son. We thought only of our own pain, our grief, our suffering. But now the Lord has shown us Ricky was not destroyed by death, but the Lord drew him to Himself."

The Life Is Not in the Shell

These mortal bodies of ours are but mere shells, and the life is not in the shell. The shell is not for keeping, but a temporary confine that enshrouds an ever-growing, ever-maturing life force. The body is a shell that acts as a transient guardian of the life inside. The shell is synthetic in comparison to the eternal life it clothes.

Every true Christian has been imbued with eternal life. It is planted as a seed in our mortal bodies that is constantly maturing. It is within us an ever-growing, ever-expanding process of development -- and it must eventually break

out of the shell to become a new form of life. This glorious life of God in us exerts pressure on the shell, and, at the very moment resurrection life is mature, the shell breaks. The artificial bounds are broken, and, like a newborn baby chick, the soul is freed from its prison. Praise the Lord!

Death is but a mere breaking of the fragile shell. At the very precise moment our Lord decides our shell has fulfilled its function, so must God's people abandon their old, corrupt bodies back to the dust from which they came. Who would think of picking up the fragmented pieces of shell and forcing the newborn chick back into its original state? And who would think of asking a departed loved one to give up his new, glorified body -- made in Christ's own image -- and return to the decaying shell from which they broke free?
To Die Is Gain?

Paul said it! "To die is gain!" (Philippians 1:21). That kind of talk is absolutely foreign to our modern, spiritual vocabularies. We have become such life worshippers, we have very little desire to depart to be with the Lord.

Paul said, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better..." Yet, for the sake of edifying the converts, he thought it best to 'stay in the shell.' Or, as he put it, "abide in the flesh."

Was Paul morbid? Did he have an unhealthy fixation on death? Did Paul show a lack of respect for the life God had blessed Him with? Absolutely not! Paul lived life to the fullest. To him, life was a gift, and he had used it well to fight a good fight. He had overcome the fear of the "sting of death" and could now say, "It's better to die and be with the Lord than to stay in the flesh."

Those who die in the Lord are the winners; we who remain are the losers. How tragic that God's people still look upon the departed as "losers -- poor, miserable souls, cheated out of a greater measure of life." Oh! But if our spiritual eyes and ears could be opened but for a few moments -- we would see our dear loved ones on God's side of the universe, walking in the pure, crystal river of eternal life -- trying to shout at us, "I won! I won! I'm free at last! Press on, dear earthlings; there is nothing to fear. Death does not sting. It is true -- it is better to depart and to be with the Lord."

Did someone you love break out of the shell? Were you there when it happened? Or did the news reach you by phone or telegram? What kind of horrifying feelings rushed through your mind when you were told, "He is dead!" or "She is dead!"?

Certainly it is natural to mourn and weep for those who die. Even the death of the righteous is painful for those left behind. But as followers of the Christ, who holds the keys of death in His hand, we dare not think of death as an accident perpetrated by the devil. Satan cannot destroy a single child of God. Satan, though permitted to touch Job's flesh and afflict his body, could not take his life. God's children always die right on His schedule -- not one second too soon or too late. If the steps of a righteous person are ordered by the Lord, He orders the final one, too.

Death is not the ultimate healing -- resurrection is! Death is the passage, and sometimes that passage can be painful, even excruciating. I have seen many of God's chosen people die in tremendous pain. But Paul answers that well by proclaiming, "...I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us..." (Romans 8:18). No matter how much pain and suffering reek havoc on these bodies -- it is not even worthy to be compared with the unspeakable glory that awaits those who endure the passage.

God's Magnetic Pull

In my years of watching the godly die, I have note one common experience. I call it the Magnetic Pull. I'm convinced that death comes to the saint long before the last breath is taken. When the Lord turns the key, an irreversible magnetic pull of God's Spirit begins to draw the loved one to Himself. Somehow, God permits that person being drawn to know it is happening. He is given an inner knowledge he is going home. He has already seen a bit of the heavenly glory. While loved ones gather around him to plead for his resurrection, you can sense he doesn't want to stay imprisoned in his shell any longer. A crack has appeared; he has peered through and has glimpsed the New Jerusalem, with all its exciting eternal joys. He has seen a vision of the glories awaiting him. To turn back would be emptiness.

Recently, I stood by the bedside of a saintly mother who was dying of cancer. Her hospital room was aglow with God's holy presence. Her husband and children were softly singing hymns, and, as weak as she was, she lifted her face heavenward and whispered, "I feel His pull. It's true -- He does draw us to Himself. It feels like a powerful

magnet, and I'm going faster and faster, and I don't want anybody to stop me now." Within hours, she broke through her fleshly shell into God's inner circle. In that holy hour, no one dared interfere with this divine process of changing, when the terrestrial was being swallowed up by the celestial.

It's so sad to hear Christians condemn God for 'taking their loved ones from them.' "Lord, it's just not fair," they argue. Though it is difficult to condemn what people say in times of deep grief, I believe such questioning can be selfish. We think only of our loss and not their gain. God only plucks out of this world those He can no longer love at a distance. Their mutual love demands they be in His presence. It is then love is perfected. To be with the Lord is to experience His love in its fullness.

So you stand helplessly by as your loved one enters that passage called death. You know it's a dark, lonely path, and you can hold their hand only so far. The time comes when you have to let that loved one go and let Jesus take them by the hand. They are no longer yours -- they belong to Him. You feel so helpless, but there is not one thing you can do but rest in the knowledge that the Lord has taken over, and your loved one is in good hands. Then in a moment, they are out of sight. The battle is over. Only the broken shell remains. The delivered soul has taken flight into God's holy presence. The death of the righteous is a precious thing. David, the Psalmist, wrote, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15). God looks upon the death of one of His children as a cherished moment. But we humans find little or nothing in this experience to cherish.

A young mother told me a pitiful story of the trauma she endured after the death of her two children. The first child died at the age of 18 months. The second lived only about two months. She had thought God had given her the second child to make up for the loss of the first -- now both were dead. She and her Christian husband went through months of self-examination. Was there sin in their lives? Had they angered God by doubting His healing power? Were they in some way responsible for the deaths of their children? Then, one dark day, a 'good Christian friend' came to them with what she declared to be a message from the Lord. They were, she said, being chastised by the Lord for hidden grudges, dishonesty in their marriage. "Those children would still be alive," they were told, "if your hearts had been purged of sin and if your confession had been right."

They were crushed to despair. But God, in His mercy, showed them how ridiculous such thoughts were. Such teaching is tragic nonsense. God doesn't play Russian roulette with lives.

Shall we quit praying for the dying? Shall we give up on the terminally ill? Should we just lie down and die, if that leads to the ultimate healing? Never! More than ever in my life, I believe in divine healing. We should pray for everybody to be healed. And the only people who are not healed, according to our concept of healing, are those who are chosen for His ultimate healing. Some are not given restored organs or limbs -- instead, they are given the perfect healing -- glorified, painless, eternal bodies. What is there that our minds can conceive as being a greater miracle than resurrection from the dead?

We Are Too Earth Bound

Any message about death bothers us. We try to ignore even thinking about it. We suspect those who talk about it as being morbid. Occasionally we will talk about what heaven must be like, but most of the time the subject of death is taboo.

How different the first Christians were. Paul spoke much about death. In fact, our resurrection from the dead is referred to in the New Testament as our Blessed Hope. But nowadays, death is considered an intruder that cuts us off from the good life we have been accustomed to. We have so cluttered our lives with material things, we are bogged down with life. We can no longer bear the thought of leaving our beautiful homes, our lovely things, our charming sweethearts. We seem to be thinking, "To die now would be too great a loss. I love the Lord -- but I need time to enjoy my real estate. I married a wife. I've yet to prove my oxen. I need more time."

Have you noticed there is very little talk nowadays about heaven or about leaving this old world behind? Instead, we are bombarded with messages on how to use our faith to acquire more things. "The next revival," said one well-known teacher, "will be a financial revival. God is going to pour out financial blessing on all believers."

What a stunted concept of God's eternal purposes! No wonder so many Christians are frightened by the thought of death. The truth is we are far from understanding Christ's call to forsake the world and all its entanglements. He calls us to come and die. To die without building memorials to ourselves. To die without worrying how we should be remembered. Jesus left no autobiography -- no headquarters complex -- no university or Bible college. He left nothing to perpetuate His memory but the bread and the wine.

What is the greatest revelation of faith, and how is it to be exercised? You will find it in Hebrews: "These all died in faith... confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth... But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Here is my honest prayer to God:

Lord, help me cut loose from the bondage of things. Let me not squander my gift of life on my own selfish pleasures and goals. Help me to bring all my appetites under your control. Make me to remember I am a pilgrim, not a settler. I am not your fan, but your follower. Most of all, deliver me from the bondage of the fear of death. Make me to finally understand that to die in Christ is gain. Help me to look forward with precious anticipation to my moment of Ultimate Healing.

Proof Scriptures: Revelation 1:18; Hebrews 2:14-15; 2 Timothy 1:10

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