

Death's Temporary Victory

Recently I heard the above phrase used at a funeral. It struck me as being a good way to look at death. When a loved one dies, we feel the pain of loss. We realize that we will never again have the opportunity to talk with or spend time with that loved one ever again. After my father's death I was dealing with a medical bill and remember talking to the hospital. The person on the other end was not wanting to talk with me because I was not my father. I told her that he is dead and if she could figure out a way to communicate with him, she should let me know. I really would like to be able and talk with my dad again. However, that will not and cannot happen. Therefore, we just have to learn to deal with it.

In "dealing with it" we have to keep this in mind. We will never be able to do anything about physical death. "It is appointed for man to die once" (Hebrews 9.27a). Jesus did not die on the cross so we would not taste physical death. If He did, then Jesus failed because we still experience this death. I wish there is something I could say to take away the pain of death, but I have come to realize that there is little that will help except to let them know we care and the passage of time.

However, we must realize that death's victory is short lived. Eventually everyone will come out of the grave. Jesus' return will bring about the resurrection of everyone. No one will be left in the grave! "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth - those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5.28-29). The grave is not the end but the beginning of eternity. We can take comfort that our love ones still exist and wait the Day of Judgment, "but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9.27b).

So far, I have talked about death in the physical realm. But there is another kind of death that is spiritual death. This occurs when one sins against God. When Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge they

transgressed God's law and were separated from Him, Genesis 2.17. Afterward they were cast out of the Garden of Eden and out of fellowship with God. As Paul said in Romans 5, death reigned from Adam to Moses, verse 14. We can go further and say death reigned from Moses to Christ. Everyone had sinned against God and was in need of forgiveness. The Law of Moses could not wash away sin. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10.4). While we mourn physical death, it is the spiritual death that is much worse. A person that dies spiritually is in danger of eternity in torment. This death is not temporary. In this case we can say Satan wins.

Thankfully God gave His Son on the cross so death does not have to win. As Hebrews 10 states, "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" verse 10; "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin" verse 17-18. The blood shed on the cross was payment for our sins, our transgressions are remitted and remembered no more. When Christ returns we will be raised and death will be defeated once and for all. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15.53-57). We can take comfort in the death of a loved one if that person lived in obedience to the Gospel of Christ. In this case, the time in the grave is short when compared to eternity in heaven. Unfortunately, those living and dying in sin will be separated from God for eternity. This passage is directed toward those that had obeyed the Gospel of Christ, they will overcome the power of death. Let us take comfort in these words. - - Dennis Tucker