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THE FEAR OF DEATH

Do you remember when you first realized that you were going to die? My youngest grandson is in his early 20's, and one of his close friends just died of cancer last week. His friend had been suffering with cancer for a long time, but as he got weaker he gradually withdrew from his friends without ever telling them what was going on so that his death was a shock to them. My grandson apparently has had one of those revelatory moments, and he has started asking questions about cancer and about death.

Perhaps you had one of those moments because of the death of a grandparent or a close relative, or it may have come when you attended a funeral. However it came, it was unwelcome news, and it took you a long while to assimilate it. At least that was my experience.

Hebrews 2 speaks about the fear of death as follows: ***He (Christ) shared in our humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*** This scripture tells us that (1) the devil holds the power of death. (2) Christ destroyed the devil and his power through His death on the cross. (3) men are enslaved by their fear of death. (4) Christ's death and resurrection has set us free from that slavery. Glory Hallelujah!

I believe that the fear of death has four components:

FIRST: People are afraid of dying and going to hell. The "world;" that is, people in media, entertainment, academia, etc, constantly ridicule all of us hicks who believe in a judgment after this life, and especially those of us who believe in a literal hell. But Hebrews 9:27 says that ***Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*** Jesus said in Mark 9:47, ***It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.*** And Romans 1:18-20 says, ***The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*** This scripture says that everyone knows deep inside that there is a God, and they know something about His divine nature. The atheist and agnostic will quickly respond that this statement is not true, that they certainly don't know there is a God. The Bible says that they do. They know (1) by the evidence of creation, and (2) these verses seem to imply that they also know by an inner intuition - - - so that when people stand before God they will be without excuse.

A friend told about a prayer experience she had following the terrible tsunami that occurred in Japan which took thousands of lives. She saw the videos of the waves rolling in from the ocean and sweeping people to their deaths and she started weeping. She said, "Oh, God, those poor people! They were raised in a Buddhist country and never had a chance to know about You." She heard a very clear and surprising word from God: "They knew!"

The fact that people know in their hearts that there is a God does not mean that they are thereby saved, it means that they have enough knowledge to start seeking God. God promises in Jeremiah 29, ***If you seek me with your whole heart, you will find me.*** God has promised to make Himself known to anyone, anywhere, any time, who earnestly and diligently seeks Him!

The answer that God has provided for men who fear judgment and hell is Jesus Christ. ***God our Savior wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.*** (1 Tim. 2:3-5)

SECOND: People are afraid of dying and leaving their spouse and children. When someone is in the process of dying from cancer or some other disease it causes them tremendous suffering to realize they are going to leave their loved ones without their love and protection. Jesus must have felt this same concern about his mother as he died on the cross. Remember that among his final words, he spoke to the Apostle John and to his mother at the foot of the cross: *Dear*

woman, here is your son, and to the disciple, Here is your mother. From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. The model for us is to entrust our loved ones into the hands of someone who is trustworthy, if there is such a one. In any case, we can and should entrust them into the hands of our God. He is our Heavenly Father and their Heavenly Father, and He loves them more than we do, and He can protect and provide for them when we cannot. Scripture says that He is The God of peace, the God of hope, and the God of all comfort.

THIRD: People are afraid that their loved ones, especially their children, are going to die. During my life and ministry I have known a number of parents, especially mothers, who live in dread of something happening to their children. Sometimes this fear was born out of an earlier death experience - the death of a brother or sister, a miscarriage or abortion, the death of an infant. I have known of mothers who live in agony because of this fear, and they drive their children to distraction by their fear and their attempts to protect them from all the dangers out there in the world. Let me remind you of something you surely know: Ultimately, we cannot protect our children, nor can we save them from death.

What we can do, as best we can, is to pray for them, to lead them to the Savior, and to entrust them into the hands of a loving Heavenly Father. Friends, I remind you that: ***There is no fear in love!*** God loves them. He is their Creator and Redeemer. The Bible says that ***Fear has torment.*** Guess who comes to torment us? So the Bible says, ***Resist the devil, and draw near to God.*** This is a spiritual fight. Stand up and fight!

FOURTH: People are afraid of the pain, the suffering, the process of death. My sweet wife, Doris, was blessed with the kind of death that every one of us would choose if we got to make the choice. In November of 2002, ten years ago! (although it does not seem possible), on a Saturday morning we went to the Prayer Rooms in downtown Grand Junction. Doris had not been feeling well, and we had been to the doctor, and on Saturday we drove to the Healing Rooms so that she could receive prayer from some of our friends. They prayed for her, and she felt a touch from the Lord and said she felt much better. As we started to drive home, only a few blocks from the Healing Rooms, she slumped over against the shoulder harness without a sound and was gone! I immediately drove back to the Healing Rooms, and the rescue squad arrived within two minutes, but there was never a response. On the night before her funeral, one of my dear friends had a dream that he later shared with me. He said he saw us driving down the road and suddenly the car was filled with a flash of light. Then an open door appeared up above our car, and Doris leaped through the door! Wow! How do you like that? She didn't say, "Glenn, I have just received an invitation. What do you think about it?" She didn't say, "Glenn, I think I will be leaving now." You would think that after 53 years of the blessing of being married to me (?) she would have been a little more polite. But, no, she took off like a bird let out of a cage.

That is the way we would all like to leave this life, but we don't get a vote. I am visiting a friend regularly who has cancer of the lung, leg and spine, and he is having a terrible time. He is down to 100 lbs., is taking 160 mg. of oxycodone daily, but that is not covering his pain. It is hard for me to find words of encouragement and hope for him, because, frankly, I don't understand why God allows his people to go through such suffering. We have to grit our teeth, remember that this earthly situation is only temporary, and that because of Jesus we will soon be in a place where there is joy and peace and no more tears and pain.

Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade, died during the past year of cystic fibrosis, an agonizing lung disease. When friends were expressing their sympathy to him, he said to them: "Don't feel sorry for me. I have the best medical care available, I am surrounded by my family, and best of all I know the Lord." He also said, "I have done my best to show people how to live for the Lord, now I want to show people how to die for the Lord." What a testimony!

Friends, because of Jesus, when we go through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil. Because of Jesus, who destroyed the one who had the power of death, we have been set free from the fear of death. Blessed be the Lord!

IF I ONLY HAD A BIG TENT!

Several years ago Fred, Lynne, and I worked for about a week with Lauro, the pastor of a church up in the Sierra Madre mountain range near Morelia, Mexico. The following year we returned to that area and ran into him in the big church in Morelia. He told us he had been fired from his church and that he was working as a foreman in a construction job, but that the men who were financing the job were cheating the workers and he was hardly making enough to support his family. He also told us that God had spoken to him very clearly and called him to enter into the full-time ministry of evangelism. He told us that the pastor of a large church had promised to buy him a big tent to use to hold evangelistic meetings, but that the pastor had not kept his promise and now he was stuck.

We arranged to take Lauro with us to meet with Pepe Quiroz, our long time friend, who has been an evangelist in Mexico

for over 40 years. We thought that Pepe could give him some advice or be able to help him enter into the evangelistic ministry.

Lauro shared his story with Pepe, and Pepe asked him why he didn't obey God and move out into the ministry as an evangelist. Lauro explained again that he couldn't do it because the pastor who had promised him a big tent had not yet kept his promise. Pepe said to Lauro, "Forget the tent! God called you to be an evangelist. Start from where you are with what you have and obey God. He will give you a tent if He wants you to have a tent." Pepe then told Lauro how God had called him to be an evangelist when he was a young man, and how he had started out with nothing but God had been faithful to His call over the years. But Lauro said, No, he couldn't start out with nothing when he had been promised a big tent. And so Lauro planned to go in another direction with his life until God provided him with the tent he needed. I presume that Lauro remained stuck and never answered God's call to be an evangelist.

The point, of course, is to ask the question: Has God called you to a certain ministry, or career path, or church relationship, or mission involvement, or whatever, and you are waiting for someone to provide you with a big tent? The question is, Will you obey God? Remember that faith is spelled R-I-S-K.

Now let me add to this subject: I personally know of three different men who at different times during the past twenty years felt led to leave Grand Junction and plant a church in a distant city. Each of the men had families, and a lot was involved in this decision. They would have to give up a secure job and take the risk of moving to the city they felt God was calling them to, hoping that they would be successful in starting a new church. They and their wives and friends spent much time in prayer seeking the will of God about these decisions. Each of them obeyed what he believed to be the will of God, and each of them, after several years of sacrifice, failed in starting a church and had to seek other employment.

This raises many questions, but I would simply remind you that the Apostle Paul answered the call of God through a vision to go over to Macedonia and help the people there. (Acts 16) Before the week was out, Paul and his companion Silas were stripped and flogged and thrown into a dungeon. God delivered them from prison, and they traveled on through Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, etc, and were welcomed and rewarded in every city! Oops! No, that wasn't the way it happened. They were rejected, jeered, flogged, and run out of town. But, in the midst of all that turmoil they planted a few believers that in the course of time grew into churches.

I simply remind you that, ***We are not our own. We were bought with a price. And, It is required of a steward that he be faithful,*** not successful. Jesus says, ***Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*** Friends, obeying God in whatever He is calling us to do is very scary. We have to decide again and again, "Will I obey what I believe to be the will of God at this point in my life?" We are not guaranteed success, but we are promised a reward for being faithful.

THE AGE OF THE UNIVERSE

According to a common understanding of the account of creation in Genesis; i.e., that the universe was created in six literal twenty-four hour days, the universe is young..... so why does it appear old? (I want to make it clear that other Christians, such as Dr. Hugh Ross, believe that the "days" in Genesis represent ages, and they point to many other scripture passages that seem to support this understanding.)

Physicist Dr. Russell Humphreys studied the age of the universe for twelve years as a scientist at Sandia laboratories, investigating various aspects of nuclear energy and relativity theory. Einstein predicted, and was later shown to be accurate, that clocks run at different rates depending upon how fast the clock is traveling and the strength of the gravitational field near the clock. This is referred to as "time dilation." Isaiah 40:22 and Jeremiah 10:12 say that God "Stretched out the heavens," which can be construed as dilating time.

Dr. Humphreys developed a model, based on many scriptures, that the universe has a boundary and that the earth is located near its center. These two assumptions are quite different than those used in the Big Bang theory, but let us remember that we are talking about "theories," and you have surely noted that scientific theories change like the weather. Based on Dr. Humphreys' theory a clock located near the center of the universe would advance by only a few earth days while a clock placed near the boundary could be advancing by billions of years.

There is a lot more to this report than I have space to present. Please see Dr. Humphreys' book, Starlight and Time. This was taken from Dr. David Nutting's website, www.discovercreation.org.

MINISTRY

My ministry partner, Lynne Cumming, and I just returned from a short trip to Mexico City. Actually, the Alfa & Omega Bible School is about an hour and a half from the airport, near the ancient city of Tlalmanalco, about 15 miles from Chalco. It is located very near the active volcano of Popocatepetl and nearer still to the dormant volcano of Ixtacuihauatl. It is the rainy season in Mexico, and everything was green and beautiful.

Pepe and his son, Israel, have been ministering to thousands of street kids over the past two and a half years. They have them picked up in buses and brought to their 14 acre site above Tlalmanalco. They have just finished a large auditorium and are building a kitchen and dormitories in order to keep the kids overnight for more in depth ministry. They told us about some of the adventures they have had. In November Pepe went to a bank in Chalco and withdrew \$3,000 to purchase construction materials. On the return trip on the highway, suddenly a car behind them swerved, turned sideways in the road, and blocked all the following traffic. Two more cars cut in front of Pepe and brought him to a stop. Guys with guns put pistols to his head in front and behind, and another guy put a gun to his wife's head. They took all the money and fled.

Apparently someone in the bank had called the robbers when they saw Pepe withdrawing the money, for a similar thing happened a short time later. A school principal went to the same bank to cash paychecks for five of his teachers. On the way home his car was stopped in the same manner and guys with guns demanded that he give them his money. He said, "Oh, no, this money is for my teachers!" Instantly they shot him in the head and killed him.

Then in March, Israel's wife, Norma, gave birth to a little girl, Reina (Queen) at a clinic in Chalco. Norma's mother was at the clinic the next afternoon when Israel felt he should return to the Bible School. That night the clinic was locked down, and a woman came to the door and cried out that she was having a baby. They unlocked the door, and about twenty men ran in with guns, tied everybody up, including the new mothers, and carried out all the medicines, computers, etc. They looked in Norma's room and didn't see a man so they slammed her door and continued on down the hall. Norma and her mother and baby immediately slipped out a back door and caught a passing cab to a safe place. The robbers kidnapped all the husbands and doctors, but released them after about five hours since there was a massive search on for them and they probably were afraid to follow through on the kidnapping part of their plan.

One evening we went with Pepe and Israel into Tepito, a 15-square block area in Mexico City that is the largest black-market in this hemisphere. Probably 70,000 people live in this area, and it is ruled by the Mexican Mafia. They sell stolen merchandise, counterfeit goods (an "Armani" suit can be purchased for about \$100), counterfeit movies, music, medicine, etc. Drug dealing and prostitution are rampant. Pepe has started three churches in Tepito, which is sort of like starting a church in hell. We left Tepito at 10:00 PM, and it took us two and a half hours to drive back (30 miles) to A&O. There is traffic gridlock in Mexico City even after midnight. On the way back, Israel told us that there is a contract on Pepe's life in Tepito - because he has brought some men to salvation that have subsequently left their pornography and drug business, and the Mafia guys don't appreciate anybody messing with their distribution system. (If I had known about all this violence I would have smuggled my pistola on the plane so I could protect Pepe and Israel.)

On Sunday I preached in a very large church. (Actually, it was a very large auditorium with a very small congregation of less than a hundred. Ha!) I spoke on "Overcoming Anger," which seems to be a problem even among born-again Christians. Si' o No?

Blessings to you all,

Glenn

WEBSITE: glennbrownministries.com

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.

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