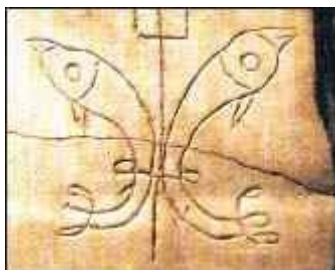


A PRECIOUS DEATH

By Dr. H. Rondel Rumburg



SBSS

Society for Biblical and Southern Studies
PO Box 472
Spout Spring, VA 24593

© 2004

A PRECIOUS DEATH

By Dr. H. Rondel Rumburg

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints,” Psalm 116:15.

The Lord, in this verse, has stated, in an unequivocal and inspired way, that *“the death of His saints”* is *“precious in His sight.”* From this passage is made known that Jehovah, the God of salvation, has saints; and their death is precious to Him. Our great question must be: **“Am I one of His saints?”**

Just think that when *the eyes* of an earthly saint closes to earthly light it opens undimmed to the celestial light of heaven where the glory of God and the Lamb are the light thereof (Rev. 21:23). When the *face* that grimaced with pain in this life enters eternity it is covered with the pleasant demeanor of joy unspeakable and full of glory. The *lips* now silent to earthly speaking has there begun to sing the song of the redeemed. Those *ears* now closed to earthly voices hear the angel voices which always say, *“Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God almighty....”* The *heart* once divided by this world is now wholly set upon the Triune God on the throne. And the *feet*, which walk no more upon this earth, are presently pointed to the throne of the Lamb of God, who laid down His life for the sheep.

Time and eternity, for the child of God, are eclipsed as he passes, without fear, through the valley of the shadow of death. As a saint enters eternity he enters the **nightless** land where the Lamb is the light thereof. The Psalmist confessed, *“How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!”* (Ps. 139:17).

First, we need to consider what “precious in the sight of the Lord” really means. What is the sense of the word *“precious?”* The basic meaning of the Hebrew word (*yaqar*) translated *“precious”* is

“costly or dear.” In the sight of God the saint has great value because the cost of his redemption was so great. Salvation cost God the Father the suffering and death of His only begotten Son. The gem of heaven was the suffering Son of God whose blood was priceless.

The applied meaning of *“precious”* is seen in its use in sacred Scripture. The word was used of that which was *“precious, costly or dear”* as a *“precious stone”* (1 Kings 10:2, 10, 11). It was also used of that which was *“precious or dear”* as loved ones and friends are held to be. Another use of the Hebrew was *“dear”* as one honored and respected. *“Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I loved thee”* (Isaiah 43:4). Lastly, the word means *“precious”* as that which is very rare. *“The Word of the LORD was precious in those days”* (1 Samuel 3:1). Even so the death of a redeemed loved one is *“precious”* to God and to us.

How is the word *“precious”* used in Psalm 116:15? The death of the saint is of immense value to our God for He has scheduled it. There is *“a time to be born, and a time to die”* (Ecclesiastes 3:2). There are no accidents with God for all things are under His omnipotent or all-powerful control. *“He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, ‘What doest Thou?’”* (Daniel 4:35). He never causes His children needless tears.

The act of removing saints from this earthly sphere is an act of deep deliberation on God's part. His complete and perfect knowledge is exercised in this regard. If the very hairs of our head are numbered, and not a sparrow falls without His knowledge, then the death of His saints is *“precious in His sight.”* Does not the God of the earth do all things well?

This is the way the Lord takes all His *“saints”* to glory. God's saving grace is demonstrated through the victory of Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from among the dead. It is a proof of the reality of grace. Therefore, *“the valley of the shadow of death”* is illuminated for the saint. This is merely the *“shadow of death.”* It is not the substance of death which is what unbelievers experience. There must be light of some kind to have a shadow. A shadow is only temporary darkness.

NOTE: We must be very careful of begrudging God when He takes our *precious ones* to Himself. Our danger is to desire a delay of their departure for selfish reasons, and then to attempt to keep them in this veil of tears. Do we, who are in Christ, remember that our greatest inheritance is on the other side of the river? Would we keep our *precious*

one out of heaven by not turning loose when God calls and takes that one by the hand to lead him or her into the celestial city? Have we become poor because our loved one is enriched with celestial riches?

We may be sorrowing as Christ is rejoicing! Remember our Saviour's high priestly prayer, "*Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me **be with me where I am***" (John 17:24). When is the Christian with Christ Jesus where He is? We are told, "*To be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*" (2 Cor. 5:8). Once the soul of the saint leaves the body it enters the Lord's presence. We may sorrow while the court of heaven rings with joy **because** an heir of heaven receives his inheritance, **because** another of Christ's sheep is safely in the heavenly fold, and **because** another of the Holy Spirit's regenerate ones is glorified.

However, we sorrow not as others who have no hope, but that is not to say we do not sorrow (1 Thess. 4:13). Believers sorrow with hope. Tears are acceptable if they glisten with the light of faith and hope. Those who are truly in Christ as Lord and Saviour will be gathered with their loved ones one day on the other side, which is just beyond this veil of tears in the realm of pure delight. Sorrow and mourning do not infest the Beulah land of eternal joy where the Lamb of God resides.

Second, what is meant by the "death" of the Lord's saints? Please consider the answer to that question with me both negatively and positively.

Negatively, consider what is **not** meant by the "*death*" of the saints? The death referred to here is **not** the "*second death*" which is the casting of both body and soul in hell. The first death among mankind was physical, but the second death is eternal. The child of God shall **not** "*be hurt in the second death*" (Revelation 2:11). Why will the child of God **not** be hurt in the second death? The reason is that he has part in the "*first resurrection*" which is when the new birth occurs. Then the believer has eternal life through Jesus Christ. John the Revelator wrote of this, "*Blessed (or happy) and holy (or set apart) is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years*" (Revelation 20:6). The second death has no power over the saint because he has part in the first resurrection, which is the new birth.

NOTE: C. H. Spurgeon commented, "Death in itself cannot be a theme for rejoicing with God. But death in the case of believers is another matter. To them, it is not death to die; it is a departure out of this world

unto the Father, a being unclothed that we may be clothed upon ... and entrance into the Kingdom.”

Death is **not** the annihilation of the soul. “*Death*” is not an entrance into nonexistence! And why is that the case? Annihilation means a ceasing to exist altogether at death. The unbeliever at death enters hell with all its torments (Luke 16:23; see Revelation 22:11). In death the mortal puts on immortality (1 Cor. 15:53). The experience of the redeemed at death is his entrance into the presence of God. The immortal has eternal life (Romans 2:7). “*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 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*” (1 Corinthians 15:53-57).

Positively, what is meant by the “*death*” of the Saints? To the saints it is a family matter because it is a breaking of the earthly (terrestrial) bonds and an entrance into the heavenly (celestial) liberty as children with their Heavenly Father and their King and Saviour Jesus Christ who give them the victory. Those who can truly pray “*our Father which art in heaven*” go to be with the Father and their Elder Brother the Lord Christ at death.

In order to die “*the death of His saints*” one must be a **saint**! This is **not** something that can be self actualized or humanly produced or ecclesiastically created! The pope cannot make saints, only Christ can make saints. A saint is one who has been wholly **set apart** unto the Lord by God the Father's ordination, by God the Son's redemption, and by God the Spirit's regeneration. In order to be “*precious in the sight of the LORD*” one **must be** “*chosen of God, and precious*” (1 Peter 2:4-6). This one has been redeemed “*with the precious blood of Christ*” (see 1 Peter 1:19-21). The one in whom faith is real or genuine “*is precious*” (1 Peter 2:7-8). This person has “*obtained like precious faith ... through the righteousness of God our Saviour Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:1). Unto this one is given “*exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4). The testing of the faith of this saint is “*more precious than of gold that perisheth*” (1 Peter 1:7). The Psalmist sang, “*The redemption of their soul is precious.... That he should still live forever, and not see corruption*”

(Psalm 49:8). To God the very cost of these saints makes them "**precious**."

To the one who is "**precious in Jehovah's sight**" death is no more an affliction or infliction of sin's penalty. Why? Christ has paid his sin debt IN FULL! The great cardinal fact of the gospel is the laying of the believer's sins on Christ. Christ has the sins of the chosen imputed (reckoned) to Him and His perfect obedience to God's Law (His righteousness) is imputed (reckoned) to them. He made satisfaction for their sins in His own death on the tree, and He was raised again for our justification. Therefore, **not one** sin is imputed to the saint of God and **not one** penalty of sin can now be exacted upon the saint. The wrath of God against that sinner/saint has been eternally satisfied in Christ. "*There is therefore **now no condemnation** to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Romans 8:1).

NOTE: C. H. Spurgeon proclaimed, "Death, then does not come to me as a believer because I deserve it and must be punished by it: it comes **to the ungodly**, it is upon them a fit visitation for their iniquities, the beginning of an unending death, which shall be their perpetual portion. **To be saints** the sting of death is gone, and the victory of the grave is removed; it is **no more** a penalty **but a privilege** to die."

To the person who is "**precious in the sight of the LORD**" death is a victory—for "*to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:21). And the saint does not cross Jordan alone. "*Yea though I walk thorough the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for **Thou** art with me; **Thy** rod and **Thy** staff they comfort me. **Thou** preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: **Thou** anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over*" (Psalm 23:4-5). The saint is **never** alone! Why? "***Thou** art with me!*" The one precious in Jehovah's sight is presented "*faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy*" thus "*to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen*" (Jude 24-25).

CONCLUSION: Moses wrote, "*Blessed be the LORD for the **precious** things of heaven*" (Deuteronomy 33:13). The **precious** things of heaven are for the enjoyment of those who are precious in the sight of the Lord.

"*Jehovah,*" said Isaiah, can "*make a man more **precious** than gold*" (Isaiah 13:12). This is exactly what He did when He purchased a man with the **precious** blood of Christ. The saint is thus the apple of God's eye because of the work of the Son of God in salvation.

HAVE **YOU** COME TO THE “*PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST*” FOR CLEANSING FROM YOUR SIN? William Cowper in his great hymn penned,

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And Sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

*“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, **Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them**” (Revelation 14:13). Yes! “**Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints**” (Psalm 116:15).*