

EXCERPTS FROM

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THE LINK

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There seems to linger in the secret thoughts of some of the Lord's people, a slight shadow of doubt, or at least, rather hazy thoughts as to the state, and place, of the believer, during the interval which divides death from the resurrection.

Now it is perfectly true that in the main, scripture looks on to the goal, and focuses the mind and heart upon the return of Christ, not death, but upon resurrection and transformation. Indeed redemption's work will not be fully completed in us until this has taken place, for no part of His redeemed ones can be allowed to remain in death, the ultimate is the redemption OF the body - not FROM the body. Only so will death be swallowed up in victory. 1 COR. 15 v. 54-57. Having said this, it nevertheless remains a fact that the vast majority of the Lord's dear children have passed over by way of the grave, and we ourselves know not whether we shall be among the company who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, or be numbered with those who sleep in Jesus. 1 THESS 4 v 13 - 18. So what of this intervening period? Is there something mysterious here, some little measure of uncertainty? Indeed not, for whilst the scriptures are mainly taken up with the glorious morning of resurrection yet they leave us in no doubt with regard to this little waiting time which is the portion of those who have gone on before.

Let us refresh our minds with the Word of God and may the Holy Spirit remove from us for ever any lurking doubts or feelings of anxiety. Let us call to mind the amazing words of the Saviour Himself to the dying thief upon the cross, "Jesus said unto him, verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise?" LK 23 v 43. The emphatic word in this verse is TODAY. In the preceding verse we have the prayer of this criminal as he prayed that the Lord would remember him in His coming Kingdom, but Christ assured him that before that selfsame day had passed, - when he breathed his final breath, then - yes then, he would be with the Lord. To make this even more definite and emphatic, Christ prefaced His blessed promise with the assuring words VERILY (Truly) I SAY UNTO YOU, not that one day you will end up in paradise, not that you will be in paradise today, that would have been wonderful, but, TODAY thou shalt be WITH ME in paradise. It was this same prospect of going to Christ at death which cheered the martyr Stephen in his last hour, "Lord Jesus" cried he

"Receive my spirit" ACTS 7 v 59. The same blessed expectation moved Paul to say "I have a desire to depart and to be WITH CHRIST which is far better". PHIL. 1 v 23. Again the apostle wrote "Absent from the body" - freed from care and suffering? NO "Absent from the body" - translated to glory? NO, "Absent from the body" - PRESENT WITH THE LORD. II COR 5.v 8. Not unconsciousness in the grave but WITH CHRIST in paradise is what awaits every believer at death. To what lengths has the devil gone in order to rob the saints of God of this blessed prospect, - The doleful dogma of soul-sleep, teaching that believers are in a state of unconsciousness between death and resurrection, or far more terrifying still, the blasphemous teaching of purgatory, the frightening thought of passing into fire in order to be purified and fitted for heaven. The word of the Saviour to the thief on Calvary for ever disposes with these God-dishonouring delusions. The thief went straight from the cross to paradise with his Lord and Saviour.

The moment a sinner believes, that moment he or she is "made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light". COL. 1 v 12. "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. HEB. 10 v 14. Our title as well as our fitness for Christ's presence rests upon His shed blood, and that alone. When our Lord was upon earth, He continually spoke of a people which had been given to Him, and at the hour of His arrest He said "Of them which Thou gavest me have I lost none". JOHN 18 v 9. So He goes to the cross. Let us call to mind His last utterance on Golgotha, - "Father into Thy hands I commend my Spirit".

Christ hung on the cross as OUR Representative, for He neither lived nor died for Himself but for believers, and even this last utterance must be viewed as a representative act, for this was the hour when His Holy Soul was made an offering for sin, (our sins), and now commending His Spirit into the hands of His Father, He is also presenting our spirits along with His, for the Father's acceptance. Here is gathered the souls of the elect and solemnly tendered with His own Blessed Spirit to God - "Into Thy Hands" were the Saviour's final words. The spirits of just men were here made perfect. HEB 12 v 23. The Father's hands are the place of eternal security, into those hands the Saviour committed us. Here beloved we are

forever safe. Said Christ concerning His own "My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Fathers hand." JOHN 10 v 29. Here is the ground of the believers' great confidence, nothing can touch the spirit of the saint which is grasped by the Hand of Omnipotence, "Kept by the power of God" says Peter. 1 PET. 1 v 5. So on Calvary the sin bearer commended to God His Spirit and as our surety, the spirits of believers also, this included the thief at His side, and that very day (the day of death) he was IN PARADISE. With such a sure word as this, then should we dread the hour of passing? If David in Old Testament days could say "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for THOU ART WITH ME" PS. 23 v 4. Why should we fear who live after the victory of Calvary? Death may be, and is The King of Terrors to the unsaved, but to the Christian it is THE DOOR into the very presence of the Lord, conscious, and in a state that is far better than anything which we have known as yet. PHIL. 1. v 23.

The motions of the Christian's soul in death, as in life, turn instinctively to God, "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit", will be our cry in that hour. How often have we cast a longing look heavenward, so when the soul of the saved reaches the brink, it will instinctively throw itself into the arms of everlasting love. Just as a river after its many turnings and twistings pours itself into the ocean, so at death we shall quit a life of many windings and corners, and leave a world which can never really satisfy our spirits, and flow out into a fuller life and experience of eternal satisfaction, to dwell before the very face of our Redeemer. The body for a while will rest in the dust from whence it was taken awaiting the shout of resurrection, when it will be glorified, at this moment our unclothed spirits which have been so much "AT HOME" with the Lord during the interval will immediately be "Clothed upon with our house which is torn heaven" then indeed will mortality be swallowed up of life. So let us like the great apostle Paul, be confident about these things. 11 COR. 5 v 1 - 8. May God grant that anxious thoughts be dispelled, and these truths be not mystical thinking, but deep realities to the soul.

How the heart of Isaac Watts must have been attuned to the prospect as he wrote:

There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign.
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers;
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heav'nly land from ours.

Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dress'd in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between.

But timorous mortals start and shrink
To cross this narrow sea,
And linger shivering on the brink,
And fear to launch away.

Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er,
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,
Should fright us from the shore.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace IN
BELIEVING that ye may abound in hope, through the power of
the Holy Ghost. ROM. 15 v 13.

W.H.M.

Beware of paddling in the ocean of God's Truth, when you
should be out swimming!

Announcements and Information

Throughout the summer months The Word of God has been faithfully preached again at the "Drive-in" church. We thank God for the help given in every way, and for the privilege of being able to make this great witness in our town. Let us continue to pray for the very many people who have been confronted with the scriptures this season. Indoors as well, the ministry of God's Word both on Sundays and Thursdays has been of a very high standard. Local folk and visitors have remarked on this and expressed appreciation.

We look forward to the visit of the Hon. Roland Lamb, M.A., who will be with us for three days in October. His subjects:

FRI. 4th OCT. REFORMATION OR REVIVAL?

SAT. 5th OCT. WANTED - INSPIRED INTERCESSORS

SUN. 6th OCT. GETTING RIGHT WITH GOD.

On Thursday October 10th, Mr Spackman will speak of the work of "The Society for Distributing the Holy Scriptures to the Jews". The Protestant Truth Society visit us on November 14th and will be speaking on "Modern Trends in Roman Catholicism" and Thursday 5th December will be our Annual T.B.S. Meeting when Mr Dix will again report on the work. An offering will be taken at each of these three meetings for the respective works.

The four Thursdays in which Mr Bush comes to us again, are of especial interest. He will be dealing with the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul and establishing of the early churches. An unusual but very profitable study.

Our hearts were sad as on the 15th of August we laid to rest the body of our esteemed friend and brother, Mr G. Garner. Yet mingled with our sorrow was a feeling of joy, and real triumph as we thought of him "AT HOME" with the Lord. We thank God for such lives of consistency and unwavering faith, and for the memory which he leaves with us. We assure dear Mrs Garner once again of our continued love and prayers.

The following was at the end of "A Declaration of the Faith and Practice" of an independent Church in Bedfordshire in the 1800s:

Useful observations and rules for promoting love and harmony among church members.

1. The Church is compared to a family, and as such it has its private affairs which should never be published, never mention therefore among strangers, what passes at a family or church meeting (EPH 3 v 15).
2. If you know a member to be in fault, except it be a case of public scandal, go and tell him of his fault between thee and him alone, praying also that he may be humbled, forgiven, restored, and preserved in future. And in every case of private trespass and offence against yourself in particular, freely forgive, remembering how you too have been freely forgiven. (MATT 18 v 15. LK. 11 v 4).
3. If you have offended anyone, though it be the humblest person of the community, frankly acknowledge the offence, and humbly ask forgiveness. (James 5 v 16).
4. Never entertain for a moment, much less publish a defamatory report without well-established proof. (PROV 10 v. 18).
5. Busybodies and tattlers, going for gossip from house to house, Paul severely reprehended as disorderly and mischievous persons, carefully avoid therefore, such people, and such conduct, and be no meddler, newsmonger, nor tale-bearer. (2 THESS. 3 v 6 - 15. 1 TIM 5 v 13).
6. Follow after the things which make for peace, and the things wherewith one may edify another. (PS 133. V. 1 - 3. ROM 14 v 19).