

It Is Written

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An Eternal Perspective

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“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:19-21, ESV).

Coming to grips with the reality of heaven is difficult for us when we are so focused on the earth. Learning to “look at the things that are not seen” because these things are eternal is a grand part of the biblical worldview (2 Cor 4:18). While we long for the “new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet 3:13), this present earth seems all too enticing a place for laying up treasures, and we suffer for it. We cling to the hope of a better life here, of better circumstances here, of better things here. Meanwhile, “there” seems too far away, so we look back at what this world offers and refuse to let go. The flesh is indeed weak.

Yet there are times when the eternal comes into sharper focus and the things of this world seem far less significant, if only because we are reminded of how temporary life really is. When death comes knocking at our door, whether for ourselves or for loved ones, our earthly treasures become as nothing. We would gladly give them all up in order to have the beauty of an eternal relationship with the ones whom we love. This is why “the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning” (Eccl 7:4). The wise who are living take to heart “the end of all mankind” (v. 2) and will always reassess their current perceptions of this world and where they are continuing to lay up their treasures.

With an eternal perspective, we can see why Paul’s desires and attitude are so instructive. With respect to himself, he recognized that living a little longer in the flesh was needed for the sake of others, but his real desire was to “depart and be with Christ, for that is far better” (Phil 1:23). That eternal perspective led him to long for the eternal dwelling with which God would clothe us in the resurrection, not to be “unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor 5:4). Since God has given the Spirit as a guarantee of this (v. 5), Paul continues, “So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight” (vv. 6-7).

With respect to others in Christ, Paul could be comforted by the hope that they also had. This means that, while grief is a natural part of letting go of one we love, it need not be a grief without comfort: “that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Thess 4:13). Why? Because “we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep” (v. 14). Comforting one another with these words (v. 18) is not reliance upon empty words just to feel better. It is reliance upon the solid, historical foundation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:20).

Death hits all of us. Hard. But Christ is coming. Resurrection is coming. A great change is coming. “What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable” (1 Cor 15:42). While flesh and blood cannot finally inherit the kingdom of God, “we shall all be changed” (v. 51). The time is coming when we will finally and fully realize how death is truly swallowed up in victory — “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 57).

By the grace of God, we no longer need to be so wrapped up in the things of this world that we are choked by the cares and riches of this life and become unfruitful for Him (Luke 8:14). We no longer need to see things or people according to the flesh, for "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:16-17).

When our perspectives truly change, then we can begin to appreciate how important it really is to store up treasures in heaven as opposed to this earth. What we continue to dwell on, what we willingly spend our time on, what we steadily pour our energy into will all show where our treasures reside; and "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Revelation 22:17-20 sums up our desires: The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

"Do You Believe In Death Bed Repentance?"

By David J. Riggs

My answer is, "I believe in one kind of death bed repentance, but not the denominational kind." Any sincere Christian who repents, whether at death or before, God forgives, but He will not forgive the one who has never become a Christian. "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him." (John 9:31). "One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." (Prov. 28:9).

The issue, therefore, with our denominational friends and neighbors hinges on just how one becomes a Christian. This must be determined by the written Word of Christ. His Word is the only means by which we can have certainty concerning eternal life. John said, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life..." (1 John 5:13). We should not let the "death bed" thought add emotionalism and detour us from the issue.

Repentance alone is not what makes one a Christian. Acts 2:38 teaches that repentance and baptism are necessary for remission of sins. Mark 16:16 makes faith and baptism necessary. In Rom. 10:9 a verbal confession is essential. Thus, all of these things are required and since baptism is the last act of obedience for conversion, one is saved at its point, not before. This is all I have the right to say about one's condition whether healthy, sick, or dying.

There are some who think is no need to serve God a whole lifetime, just wait until the end, repent and be saved. But there is no passage anywhere that would uphold the thinking of such people. What makes one think he can be stubborn and rebellious to God's laws all his life and at the last minute repent and God will accept him? What makes him think God will give him opportunity to repent at the end? On several occasions in the Old Testament, God's people were rebellious and would not listen to God's reproof. When calamity came upon them, and they finally decided to call upon God, He said he would not hear them (Prov. 1:24-28; Ezek. 8:17-18). Death bed repentance is not taught in the Bible, but rather, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth..." (Eccl. 12:1).