

Thus Saith God's Word

by Rev. Ted Brooks

"If a man dies shall he live again? And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain. Ye are yet in your sins."

"Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruit of them that slept." (1 Corinthians 15:17-20, Job 14:14)

Strange as it may sound, man can and does die and live again. Job asked the question and St. Paul added to his faith and to ours. All of us are going to experience death. Jesus submitted to the stroke of death. "And that He was buried and that He rose again the third day, according to the scripture." (1 Corinthians 15:4)

Jesus was buried. He was pronounced dead. Thomas cried out "Unless I feel, or see in his hands the print of the nail and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John 21:25)

Job and Thomas were not in denial of Christ but doubt had crept in and had brought a torturing question which left them with a crippling faith. "If a man dies, will he live again?" "Except I see and feel, I will not believe."

Others had tried to comfort Thomas, but for someone to tell him that a man had died and rose again was a little more than he could take. Thomas was saying "I will not believe in a dead corpse."

Job was sick and death was real. Job was concerned about life and death. To Job it had become a reality. Job knew that he was going to die. Unlike some of you, the way you live and act tells others around you that you don't believe that you are going to die. Job looked around and he noticed a tree and he had the answer about the tree, but Job turned and wanted to know about himself. If I die, where will I be? Will I be alive or dead? Oh my friend, Brother Paul reminds us all. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (1 Corinthians 15:19) Brother Paul is saying if only in this life you are feeling for prints and scars, you are in trouble. In other words, if only you can make it by a wave of emotion and excitement and do not have a strong faith that if a man dies he can and does live again, you are in trouble.

Brother Paul said to the students at Berea "In that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11)

Oh my friend, we are living in a time when it seems everyone has a book to read other than God's word. Folks come and go from the church without the readiness of the mind. Your daily book of devotion means more to you than God's word. Paul declared "Search the scripture to see if these things be so."

We have already said that Job was sick with pain and sores. Friend, it is not unseemly to think about dying when you are in good health. But it is if you wait till death gets a grip on your soul.

You may be one of those who have death a far off distance. There will come a day in life as Job was, you will stare death face to face. Job cried if a man dies will he live again? Job was concerned about death. Are you? Job knew that death was fixed and appointed like a clock. The hands on a clock can be reset and moved by man, but you and I, Friend, have a set time when we're going to die.

Job knew death was a remover which takes things, people of all ages from this world. Death is like a cloud, it vanishes away to the graveyard and does not come back home.

Job was looking at that tree and saying, "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down that it will sprout again. And that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth like a plant." Job could figure out the death and life of a tree, but "man dieth and wasteth away, yea man giveth up the ghost and where is he?" (Job 14:7-10)

Oh my friend, for man it will take more than a scent of water to get us back up out of the ground. Job saw man "As the water falls from the sea and the flood decayeth and drieth up. So man lieth down and riseth not, till the heavens be no more, they shall not wake nor be raised out of their sleep."

Can I ask you a question. Do you read other books more than God's Holy Book? When I was a young boy in church we would sing "The B-I-B-L-E, oh that's the book for me. I stand alone on the word of God, that's the book for me."

Paul declared when you come together there ought to be a readiness of mind to search the scripture to see if these things be so. If you fail to read God's word, later on as Job discovered, you will find death to be stern and that death does not need to be improved upon but you and I need to improve. When you fail to read and search, it will be a surprise to know that death is stern and is not affected by your cries for Mom and Dad, loved ones. You will learn that those who smile, smile no more. Those who played, play no more. A dead person is stern, holding a bold look and he or she will show no concern for loved ones. The undertaker will work hard to make us all look natural, but we must not err, we must be ready to meet God. Jesus is the answer, my friend. To Thomas he said, "See my hands, my side, and believe." "If a man dies shall he live again?" Many of you, like Job, are struggling with your eternal life. You want to live with the now and here some of you are struggling with the gloom of a senseless existence. You need to be saved or be restored in faith in the knowledge of eternity. Like a cork on the water, up and down you have lost sight of heaven and hell. Now you are sitting with a suicide note in your hand. Struggling with this note, you are looking over the past. You have had few difficulties, many friends, great success. The sad part is you have gone from one husband to another, from one house to another house. In fact you have traveled a lot and seen many things and like Job said "Become as the flood decayeth and drieth up." (Verse 11)

You are fed up with inventing devices to fill up twenty-four hours. You find it hard to believe anyone could get so lonely. In fact it's unbelievable, life has been so good to you, you have got money, success, kids, wife, husband, yet you are lonely, bored, and you sit with a note to end it all. If only in this life we have hope in Christ, we are most miserable. (1 Corinthians 15:19)

You see, you have never decided "Is the tomb occupied or empty?" This decision is yours. Somewhere in life you have got to declare that Jesus lives. You cannot be of an idle mind. There can be no tomb called the wrong tomb. He was not stolen, You must declare with a readiness of mind, He lives. Christ Jesus lives today, yesterday and forever. You must declare his tomb to be empty and Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. (1 Corinthians 15:20) Paul set the futility of everything, "If there be no life after the grave, or if the dead rise not then is not Christ raised. Our faith is vain."

So Job closed the argument by saying, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

Listen son, young girl, Satan wants two things of you, your mind and your time. Your mind is a battle ground where wars are fought, some won and some lost. This is a war you cannot afford to lose. If a man dies shall he live again? Job said "I will wait till my change comes." Then he added "Thou shalt call and I will answer thee, thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." (Job 14:14-15)

Job was standing over the graves of his family with a strange question, "If a man dies will he live again?" Listen, it matters how you die. In your search for Christ there is a way. Jesus said, "I go my way and ye shall seek me and shall die in your sins. Where I go, ye cannot come." (John 8:21)

You don't need a note in your hand. To live in this world without Jesus will be torment enough. Where are you now? If Jesus were to call you right now, could you say as Job, "Thou shalt call and I will answer thee?" My friend, what would be your reply? Wait a little longer, or would it be "as the Lord of Israel liveth, to others He may seem, dead, but to us of a readiness of mind, those who have searched the word and found it to be so, He, Christ, is alive."

A readiness of mind will declare "I know He lives and because He lives I can face today and tomorrow." With a readiness of mind I can confess the cross was bitter, but He lives. The spear made havoc, but He lives. The grave was fastly closed, but He lives. In a tomb with air or no air, He lives. Men and devils did their worse but He lives. I know this world will say it is impossible for a dead corpse to live again, I say He lives. The man who heard him say "I am He that liveth" will hear him say, "Fear not I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive forever more. Amen and have the keys to hell and death." (Revelation 1:17-18)

Oh my friend, put up those thoughts. Build you a cottage so your widow may look on the mighty oaks of God's presence that you can live and move and have your being beneath the constraining power that God is here. He lives ought to be fixed and fast in our hearts. We are and were chosen of God, a risen Saviour He lives.

Oh son, death is sure. Graveyards are filling up. We have settled the question that death is certain. We all at one time or another attend funerals. The question would be asked where is He? Is He or she not better off? No, my friend, to die without a risen savior is to hear him say, "Better to have left the womb." My friend, you will not be perceived as a tree or root, it will take more than dew or water to get us back up out of the ground. Paul said and I close with this: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:24-26)

Reflections

by Alta Nye Oxendine

WHAT IS SALVATION?

In recent years a number of young people have told me that they had gotten "saved" a few months or years earlier, but that they soon wandered away, into the life-style of the world around them. Also some older people (particularly men) in their thirties and forties have shared with me that they got "saved" in their youth, but began drifting into drugs soon afterward.

What does it mean to get "SAVED"? I used to think this was one of the strangest expressions I had ever heard! I remember a conversation (after transferring to the College of Emporia in Kansas) with a fellow student about that very term. He was from the western part of the faraway (to me) state of NC and had attended one of the southern churches, where the word "saved" was often used.

I had never heard it used that way in my mother Methodist Church. Both of us belittled that term!

In fact, by the time I came along, even the term "sin" was seldom mentioned in our church. Mother told me in her later years that our Methodist Episcopal Church used to be a lot more evangelistic, back when she was young.

While I was growing up, we sometimes sang the songs "Rescue the Perishing" and "Jesus Saves". One Sunday School teacher had us sing: "John 3:16" for the chorus in place of "Jesus saves!" And sometimes the words "conversion" and "salvation" were still used, at least when our church had an "Evangelistic Service".

The Random House College Dictionary includes these definitions for "SALVATION":

"the act of saving or protecting from harm or loss"
"the state or means of being thus saved or protected"

(In theology): "deliverance from the power and penalty of sin"

Like the magnificent world brought into being by our Creator, I now believe salvation is a free GIFT provided by God through His Son, Jesus Christ. The way I see SALVATION (or getting "saved") is this: a two-way process between our divine Creator and the person who has been created through His wonderful plan of procreation.

God is always with us, shoeing His love in a million ways that we mostly take for granted. For the most part He QUIETLY invites us to turn the reins of our life over to Him, as we come to realize what His Son, Jesus, the Christ (or Messiah) has done for each of us through HIS life, death, and resurrection!

But, sometimes, it seems, God has to do something dramatic to get our attention. Although I do not believe He CAUSES tragedies, it is clear that He does ALLOW such things to happen. In this situation, He may be more likely to get through to us. Unless we blame HIM for our suffering, and turn even further away from Him. I believe He always stays lovingly near us, through all our ups and downs, waiting to help us live the kind of life we were DESIGNED to live while we are in this world.

It's up to you and me to RESPOND! He will not FORCE Himself upon us! But we must be honest, fully facing our actions and attitudes from our childhood to the present --- becoming aware of those areas in which we have deliberately sinned, or have otherwise failed to make the mark.

In fact, I have heard SIN described simply as "MISSING the mark!" To be saved and thus achieve a STATE of salvation (as I understand it) we must come HUMBLY to God and confess our sins, asking for forgiveness and complete cleansing, not simply asking SELFISHLY for the inner Peace, Joy, and Contentment that we cannot produce OURSELVES.

REPENTANCE must play a big part if there is to be a genuine turnaround, with you or me heading in a totally NEW direction, away from ourselves, TOWARD God and other people.

THEN WE HAVE TO HANG IN THERE!!!
Of course it's still impossible to keep "hanging in there" if we rely only on our own mental, emotional, and spiritual strength.

WE'LL GET TRIPPED UP EVERY TIME!!
As I remember saying to the youth at Sandy Plains Methodist Church over 40 years ago (when I was a rural worker, attempting to give help and encouragement to members of six Indian churches) and again on the last night of the recent Sandy Plains revival.

"It's not easy to be a Christian!" (To keep following Jesus EACH day of our life, wherever we may be.)

But, thank God, we do not have to rely on our OWN resources. In fact, many parts of the Bible (like Proverbs, 3 verses 5 and 6) remind us that we are NOT to "lean unto our own understanding" but to "trust in the Lord with all our heart" and to "acknowledge Him" DAILY in all our ways, giving Him the chance to "direct our paths" for that day.

If you are a young person, and you are tempted day and night to "live it up," without regard to any of the teachings from your parents, your school, the church, or the Bible, I URGE you to take all your DESIRES and burdens "to the Lord" and just "leave them there"!!

As I shared with the Sandy Plains young people (at age 29, and again at age 73) even though "it's not EASY to be a Christian, it's worth EVERYTHING IT COSTS!" I still believe this with all my heart!

NOTHING BETTER!
If we who have made the choice to follow Christ (instead of the CROWD) would hang in there for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, we would KNOW, without any doubt, that there is NOTHING BETTER out there (in fact NOTHING THAT CAN COMPARE) anywhere on this vast planet, or in the vaster universe beyond!!!



The first orchestra in America was founded in Boston in 1810.

TEEN MISS AND MISS LUMBEE APPLICATIONS (2001)

The Lumbee Regional Development Association (LRDA) is currently accepting applications for the 2001 Teen Miss and Miss Lumbee Pageant, beginning April 17, 2001.

Miss Lumbee Contestant, must be an enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe, between the ages of 17 1/2 and 26 years of age, a high-school graduate and single, never married or Cohabited and accessible to Pembroke as a home base.

Teen Miss Contestant, must be 14 by June 30th, 2001 and a member of the Lumbee Tribe, still in school and cannot reach 17th birthday before July 6th, 2001.

If you meet the criteria and are interested in competing as a contestant, please contact **Connie Jones at (910) 521-2462**. You can pick up applications at the Lumbee Tribal Enrollment Office located on Union Chapel Road in Pembroke.

Applications must be completed and returned by April 30th, 2001. An entry fee of \$100.00 is required of all final contestants.



2001 Spring Pow-Wow
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Kelsey Carter

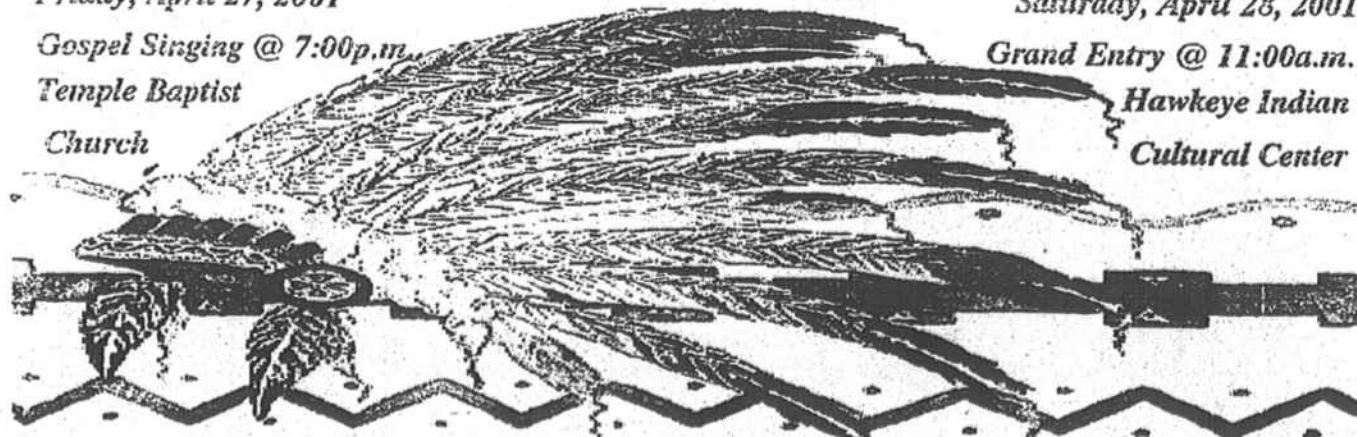
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