

# “Blessed Are The Dead”

**Introduction.** Several of our members have recently attended funerals of family members of their spiritual and physical families. Our hearts go out to them all. There have been several high-profile celebrities such as Yogi Berra, David Bowie, Glenn Fry, and Alan Rickman that have also died recently. Death is hard, prevalent, and inevitable. Death is just as much a part of life as birth, though we sure do not view (or memorialize) them the same. But have you ever considered how differently from God — the Creator and Sustainer of life — we view death?

John was specifically instructed to write, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth” in Revelation 14:13. “Blessed” originally described the happy state of the gods as opposed to the state of mortal man. Among the Greeks of Jesus’ day only the gods were truly the blessed ones. “Blessed” finally came to mean outward prosperity and therefore was synonymous with “rich” or “happy.” Happiness in the usual sense is a result of man’s feelings produced by exterior circumstances and depends largely on the chances of life. “Blessed” conveys the highest form of spiritual and moral prosperity. It is possible because lives are truly committed to the one who is supremely blessed: God (1 Timothy 1:11) and Christ (1 Timothy 6:15). Even when the departed was, as far as we can determine, a righteous person who lived and trusted “in the Lord,” do we really view their passing as a “blessed” event?

Christians should view the passing of saints as “blessed” like God, so we are going to at three points of view about death found in the Bible and learn how to view death as God does.

## ***I. Death Is A Vindication***

- A. Death teaches us that the quality of life is not tied to its length (Psalm 90:10). It is a vindication of what really matters. We view and react very differently to the death of someone who has lived a long life than we do to the passing of those who have lived a short time. Perhaps this is only natural, and human.
- B. However, how the departed lived is much more important, and a more accurate, measure of their life than its length. Whether “long” or “short,” was their life one of spiritual content (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)? Did they live by the principles of what God really wants (Deuteronomy 10:12; Hosea 6:6; Romans 2:29; James 1:27)? If so, their death was and should be viewed as a “blessed” event (Psalm 116:15). A godly life is precious to God, and should be praised, celebrated, and emulated by us regardless of its length.

## ***II. Death Is A Liberation***

- A. For the righteous, death is a graduation day. Life is the “school” of only a few years that prepares us for our eternal home. So the school of life trains us for either an eternity of misery, torment, anguish, and regret of what might have been, together with the devil, his demons, and the dregs of human society from all of time (Matthew 8:12; 25:41); or alternatively, an eternity of joy and blessedness in the presence of God singing praises with the angels of Heaven (Revelation 7:4-12; 19:1-4).

- B. This liberation at the end of life is only possible because they have previously liberated themselves from the bondage of sin (Romans 6:16-22). The free gift of God in His gracious provision of the sacrifice of Christ is the basis of salvation (Romans 5:12-18). The acceptance of that sacrifice through obedient faith is the culmination of salvation (Romans 1:5; 16:26). This will certainly be a graduation — a day of celebrated accomplishment, and the completion of a necessary but preparatory journey.

### **III. Death Is A Rest**

- A. Life can be, and often is, hard. Once we commit ourselves to serving God and preparing for eternity, Satan will do everything within his power to make us doubt, retreat from, and recant that commitment — he can, and often does, make life difficult and miserable. Discouragement is a real foe (Psalm 6:6; 55:4-7; cp. Numbers 11:15; 1 Kings 19:1-4, 9-10; Acts 27:20), and many have given up walking by faith because of it.
- B. But for the one who perseveres in godliness, death is a blessed rest. God said that for those who “die in the Lord” death is a “rest from their labors” (Revelation 14:13). Whatever pain, hardship, temptation, and trials Satan threw their way to dissuade them has ended (2 Corinthians 4:17-18; James 1:13-16). The toil and labor of working for the Lord and His cause is likewise completed (1 Timothy 6:12; Revelation 2:10). Death is blessed, sweet, happy rest for the godly (Hebrews 4:1-13).

**Conclusion.** Our physical bodies were not “built to last.” They were created to be a temporary abode for an eternal spirit that God placed within them. We know what happens to our body and our spirit (Ecclesiastes 3:20; 12:7).

Therefore, death is the necessary conclusion of physical life as much as birth is its beginning (1 Corinthians 15:35-58). But if we view life as God does, death can be a precious, blessed, rest that culminates in eternity with God. We may selfishly mourn the passing of a righteous loved one for what we lose, but be happy for what they have gained. If you would like to have rest that ultimately culminates in an eternity with Jesus (Matthew 11:28), please come up tonight and respond to the gospel’s call.

I am deeply indebted to Philip Strong for the use of his material.