

"He's Better Off Now"

Have you ever said, "He's better off now"? We hear folks saying this all the time. Generally it is used after someone has suffered a long and painful illness. Death finally comes. The struggle is now over. No more tubes, monitors, hospitals, and all the things that come with critical illness. Death is viewed as a relief. Death is welcomed. It is finally over.

To comfort the family, someone almost always says, "He is better off now." They say this, thinking that the dreaded disease is no longer causing the suffering that it has. For the person who has walked by faith this is true. The family of a Christian has this hope. They are better off now.

But without realizing it, many offer these same words to those who don't walk with Christ. They offer a false hope and a false comfort. Death is not the end. Consider what happened to the rich man after he died: "The rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame'" (Lk. 16:22b-24). The Lord's description of the rich man is very alarming. He stated that the rich man was in "TORMENT," "AGONY," and in "FLAME." The rich man wasn't better off after death. There are things worse than death!

The Suffering After Death Is Worse Than What We Suffer In Life.

- 1.. Because there is no one to help: -- There are no hospitals in Hades. There are no medicines to relieve the pain. There is no one to pray over you.
- 2.. Because it does not end: -- The suffering of punishment is eternal. Jesus used the expressions "where the worm does not die" (Mk. 9:44) and "eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:46).
- 3.. Because a person deserves it: -- There are no innocent sufferers after death. No one suffers after death by accident. There are no victims after death.

We don't like to think about the punishment of God. The Hebrew writer reminds us, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). So, be careful when you say, "He's better off now."

- by Roger Shouse

Do you believe in death bed repentance?"

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).

- by David J. Riggs

Low Hanging Fruit

Anyone who has ever harvested fruit from a tree knows that the easiest picking is of the fruit which hangs on the lowest limbs. This fruit can be quickly gathered - no ladders, no reaching, no problem. This is, for obvious reasons, always the first fruit to be picked.

Business people sometimes refer to "low hanging fruit" when they are not even discussing apples, peaches, or oranges. They use this expression to identify the people, products, profits, etc., that are easiest to realize. For business men, just like orchard keepers, it makes a lot of sense to go after the "low hanging fruit" first.

As Christians, we have the responsibility of sharing the gospel with the masses of lost people in the world. Contemplating this job can be an overwhelming thing. There are more than seven billion people in the world today. In fact, we are told that there are currently more living people on earth than the sum total of all the people who have died throughout all time! Think of it: more than half of all the people who ever needed to learn about God and His will are out there today - waiting for us to get the "good news" to them.

How can we hope to succeed? Where should we begin? How can we tackle this enormous job? Here's a suggestion: GO FOR THE LOW HANGING FRUIT! By that we mean that we should first target the people around us that we know personally -- our friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, and other acquaintances. These are the folks that we know best, and they know us. Our chances to influence them will be the greatest. Yes, we need to reach all those nameless masses out there, but why not start first by sharing God's truth with the ones right at hand? Such folks will not require special "evangelism plans," or the expending of large amounts of money. We can just talk to them around the kitchen table, across the back fence, or while seated at the coffee break table. We can realize a huge harvest for the Lord and His kingdom in this simple way. Let's get busy!

- by Greg Gwin