

HEAVEN AND THE AFTERLIFE

BISHOP RC BLAKES, JR.

Biblical Comfort for Grieving Loved Ones

Introduction: We Grieve, But Not Without Hope

Grief is not a sign that faith has failed. Grief is the price the heart pays for having truly loved. Even Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, though He knew resurrection was only moments away. Christianity does not require us to deny the pain of death; it gives us a hope strong enough to carry us through it.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–14

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Paul does not say that believers should not sorrow. He says we do not sorrow like people who have no hope. Our tears are real, but so is the resurrection.

Quote: "There are better things ahead than any we leave behind." — C. S. Lewis

1. THOSE WHO DIE IN CHRIST ARE IMMEDIATELY WITH THE LORD

The moment a believer leaves the body, that person enters the presence of Christ. They are not wandering, abandoned or trapped between worlds. They are safely with the Savior who redeemed them.

2 Corinthians 5:6–8

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: For we walk by faith, not by sight: We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

Philippians 1:21–23

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.

Your loved one may be absent from your home, but they are present with the Lord. We carried them as far as human love could carry them; Jesus received them from there.

Quote: "Death is no more than passing from one room into another." — Helen Keller

2. THEIR SUFFERING HAS ENDED FOREVER

The condition in which your loved one left this world is not the condition in which they remain. Disease, pain, weakness and mental decline belonged to their earthly experience; they do not follow the redeemed into God's presence.

Revelation 21:3–4

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle

of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Revelation 14:13

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

They are no longer struggling to breathe. They are no longer fighting the illness. They are no longer imprisoned in a failing body. Their suffering did not follow them home.

Quote: "Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal." — Thomas Moore

3. DEATH HAS SEPARATED US TEMPORARILY— NOT ETERNALLY

For those who are in Christ, death does not mean "never again." It means "not yet." The separation is painful, but it is not permanent. The return of Christ will bring resurrection and reunion.

1 Thessalonians 4:16–18 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Notice Paul's language: "together with them." Christian comfort is not built merely on the belief that our loved ones are in a better place. It is built on the

promise that Christ is returning, the dead will be raised, and God's people will be gathered together.

Quote: "Christians never say goodbye for the last time." — Charles Spurgeon

4. GOD WILL RESURRECT AND RESTORE THE WHOLE PERSON

The Christian hope is not that the spirit will remain separated from the body forever. Our ultimate hope is bodily resurrection. God will raise what was mortal and transform it into something incorruptible and glorious.

1 Corinthians 15:42–44

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.

Philippians 3:20–21

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

The body may return to dust, but the Creator has not surrendered His claim upon it. What was buried in weakness will be raised in power. What was marked by disease will be raised in glory.

Quote: "Our old history ends with the cross; our new history begins with the resurrection." — Watchman Nee

5. HEAVEN IS OUR PRESENT COMFORT, BUT THE NEW CREATION IS OUR ETERNAL HOME

Heaven is real, and believers who die are with Christ. But the biblical story does not end with God's people remaining disembodied in heaven. God will make all things new. Heaven and earth will be united under Christ, and God will dwell forever with His redeemed people.

Revelation 21:1–5

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.

God's final answer to death is not merely relocation—it is restoration. He will not simply help us cope with death. He will destroy it. The story ends with God dwelling among His people in a creation where nothing can separate them again.

Quote: "Joy is the serious business of Heaven." — C. S. Lewis

Closing: Death Does Not Have the Final Word

We will miss those we love. There will be empty chairs, difficult anniversaries and moments when memories suddenly bring tears. Faith does not mean that we stop missing them. It means we know where to take our sorrow. Your loved one is absent from you, but present

with the Lord. Their suffering has ended. Your separation is temporary. Resurrection is coming. God will make all things new.

John 11:25–26

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

Our hope is not built upon speculation about heaven. It is built upon the risen Christ. Jesus did not merely tell us about eternal life—He entered death, defeated the grave and rose with all power in His hands.

1 Corinthians 15:54–57

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we cry—but we do not collapse. We mourn—but we do not despair. We say goodbye—but not forever.

Because Jesus lives, death is not the end, the grave is not the conclusion, and separation will not have the final word.