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What Is True Hope Against Death's Reality?

Eric V. Snow, sermonette, 11-13-2010, Ann Arbor, Michigan, UCG-IA

Did any of you wonder where Yndira and I were last Sabbath? We spent this past weekend in the Cleveland, Ohio area because my aunt Marge died (age 87) of Alzheimer's Disease. She was one of my father's older sisters. She had lived a very busy, active, financially successful life: She had four children while also establishing with her second husband what later became what later became large, successful travel agency.

As part of her business, she traveled the world: She visited literally 100 countries. She had so much energy that she could go out dancing the night after getting off an international flight. Wrote

(bad) poetry, made up puzzles for her children to solve to get their Xmas gifts, colorfully cheap. At my aunt's funeral a "celebrationist" working for the funeral home gave a eulogy. Most of it was an oral biography based on what my cousins told her. Since most of my father's family is very skeptical and irreligious in outlook, the "celebrationist" only could offer false comfort to her listeners: That their good memories of Marge in their hearts would live on. But when we think about the brute reality of death, that helps little. To focus our minds on happier thoughts about the deceased simply doesn't solve the basic problem.

S.P.S.: So today I will show that God's promise to resurrect us to eternal life is what gives us true hope and real comfort against death.

At my aunt's funeral, which was billed as a celebration of her life, the "celebrationist" read aloud a certain skeptical poem. My aunt had wanted it read during her funeral. Her father, my grandfather, had written it more than 50 years earlier. It was read aloud at his funeral in 1960. I'll quote part of it here:

"Angels, Saviours! Pass us by
We want no home up in the sky;
Just spare this bit of earth and we
Will stay here to eternity.

Through life's parade was very nice,
We would not choose to see it twice;
We are content to leave its mirth
And join ourselves with Mother Earth."

It's important to realize that this poem generally denies any desire for living forever. It isn't just attacking the

traditional teaching that heaven is where the saved dead live.

But honestly, is such skeptical thinking really comforting? If we could live happily forever, wouldn't we want to do so? What hope is there in being dead forever and feeling no pain? That's just surrendering to ultimate enemy.

Eph. 2:11-12

If we don't believe in the God of the Bible, we have no hope: What's the point of life then? Is the purpose of life merely maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain? Is that intellectually satisfying? If there's no God, no afterlife, and no reward for obeying His will, why should we care about other people's needs much? That is, do we only avoid hurting and killing other people merely because our neighbors,

the police, and/or courts could punish us if we don't behave?

Instead, real hope against death is found in Jesus' promise to resurrect us.

John 11:24-27

Most of my cousins at Aunt Marge's funeral wouldn't have believed in these words. The words of the "celebrationist" were mostly a biography describing my aunt's life and personality. They offered no way out from the problem of death. Indeed, they tried to evade the problem by ignoring any hope of a solution to it. On top of it all, the irreligious beliefs of much of my father's family deny any solution is possible. "Existential dilemma": We all know we're going to die, so what are we going to do about it?

By contrast, the Baptist minister at my grandmother's funeral, my mother's mother, back in 2000, at least presented a solution. He described her life and personality only a little, but at least pointed people to Jesus and salvation through Him. Sure, we in the Church of God would say that the doctrines he believed in are wrong in many ways. But his general presentation was far better than what the "celebrationist" said last Saturday at my Aunt Marge's funeral. They engaged my emotions far better than what I heard in Cleveland last week.

The Bible tells us what the purpose of life is **and** what the solution for death is. God offers us glorious eternal life as a member of His own Family. It's far better than what my grandfather's skeptical poetry offers, which was a painless totally unconscious death for all eternity.

What hope is there in that? **Let's turn to Jesus Christ for the solution to the problem, so then we can have hope and comfort in the face of death.**

So in conclusion: Let's remember that we have real hope and true comfort against death because of God's promise to resurrect us to eternal life. But in the here and now, called Christians need to choose life in order to be saved against death. For as Jesus promised in John 3:15: "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

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