



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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JUMP START #494

Rev. 14:13- “And I heard a voice from Heaven, saying, ‘Write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “So that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.”

This passage in Revelation is interesting for a couple of reasons.

First, the way it starts. “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” Few understand that and fewer still would ever confess to that. We often do not view death as a blessing. We see it as it was given Genesis as a curse. We dread it. We don’t like to talk about it. We do all we can to put it off and when it happens, our common words are, “it’s a loss,” or “they are gone,” or “it’s a tragedy.” Less common expressions are, “kicking the bucket” or “bought the farm.”

That’s not how God sees it. From Heaven’s perspective, death is a blessing, that is, if one is righteous and walking with the Lord. Their journey has ended, not at the cemetery, but in the arms of God who will take them home. Never again will they have to “fight the fight of faith,” or “resist temptation,” or struggle in this world. Those things are finished. It is a joy and accomplishment when one finally finishes college with their degree. They worked and worked for that. Many tests, papers, classes and quizzes. The goal was the degree. They stayed with it and finished it. The walk of a Christian takes us to Heaven. That’s the goal. That’s where we want to be. There are many things here that are part of getting there. We have responsibilities, we have worship, we have shining our light, we have standing for good. Like quizzes, tests, and papers, these things are not our focus, our focus is completing and getting to Heaven. Blessed are those who die in the Lord.

The second principle we find here is that those who die in the Lord, “rest from their labors.” The labor is not going to work every day. It’s not rest from house work or cooking, or cleaning garages. The rest is connected to the Lord. These are those who labored for the Lord. They lived for Jesus. They taught when they could. They encouraged when they could. They put others first. They tried to help others see Jesus. They worked and worked and tried to mold their family, helped the congregation, and influenced their world. They never quit. They used their talents for the Lord. They made a difference in the lives of many. Their impact is seen even after death. The passage says, “for their deeds follow them.” The good that they have done live on even though they don’t. Another generation taught. Another person influenced. Commitment to the Lord, love for good, faithfulness to the word are qualities that shape families for generations, influence congregations for decades and whose memory live on in the hearts of God’s people.

Jesus said we must work for the night is coming, and so it is. We labor for the Lord. We go out to visit someone when we are tired and don't feel like it. We help someone when we'd like to stay home and watch TV. We teach yet another class. We preach yet another sermon. We invite yet another person. The righteous are busy doing these things all the time. They don't even remember all the things they have done, and they wouldn't want to, because they remember what the Lord has done for them.

What waits these righteous at death is rest. Rest from their labors. Their weary hands, tired hearts finally get to stop as they are embraced by their Lord and they get sweet Heavenly rest. Some would like that now. But now is not the time. It comes after death. Now, we must be busy. Now is the time for work. Now is when the Lord needs us and is counting on us. Lift those weary hands and help yet another. Raise that tired voice and yet teach another. Soon the Lord will tap us on the shoulder and tell us we can rest, but not now.

I am thankful that my path crosses with such that labor for the Lord. Dear departed, enjoy the sweet rest that God has promised you. You only did what you were supposed to, but you did it well, and you never quit, and it made a difference. You are among the BLESSED. Now it is up to us to pick up the spiritual tools and carry on.

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