

To Die in Christ is Gain

Bob Jennings | illbehonest.com

Bob: “Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of God, yet not with all his heart” – 2 Chronicles 25:2. Wow! “Lord, don’t let me have that on my tombstone! Don’t let that be my biography! I did right in the sight of God but not with all my heart! Help us!

Tim: Well Bob, since you found out that you have cancer. I guess I’m wondering... you had told me last night that it was one thing for you to think about what you might do in your life when you were healthy and you made it sound like but now being in this situation. Maybe, it causes you to think different and I’m wondering, now that you know you have cancer. Can you... is there anything that comes to your mind as far as on how things have changed in your thinking, how you view the Lord, how you view life, how you view pastoring or being a husband, how you view death? You know since you’ve found out, are there any areas where you really feel like my thinking has really changed a lot. Viewing death from this vantage point versus all the rest of my life how I viewed it?

Bob: In some ways, no it hasn’t changed. I would say it has heightened and magnified in the things I’ve always known as a Christian. One thing that I’ve seen more of is just the incredible privilege that the Lord has given to us of serving Him in this present age. The incredible privilege of walking with Him, of enjoying Him. The incredible privilege of serving Him, and being in the battle for truth, being in the arena of faith. The incredible privilege of opening the Scriptures. It’s such a privilege to serve the Lord, the Kings of kings, and to gather together with the saints, and to sing the songs of Zion, to sing the songs of God right in the midst of the enemies camp, it’s just such a high privilege. I think I felt and seen more of that since I’ve learned of this cancer.

Also, especially since I became a Christian, I realize that life is brief, the flesh is frail, and death is certain. All those things, yea they are more real, it’s just more reality. I’ve been very mindful as a Christian that life is brief. You hear older Christians say that and preachers tell you that always. Right when I was first converted that my life, I was very mindful that life is brief. We don’t have much time, it’s going to go by so quickly. The Scriptures say it over and over again, comparing are life to a sleep comparing are life to a runner that passes by, comparing are life to a grass. Not rocks but grass, not trees but grass. So, I’m very aware of that but now, you know it’s happened. I can remember when I was twenty-five and I was driving a gravel truck. There was an older Christian, riding with me for a while, he was just riding with me to have some fellowship and pass some time. He was seventy-five, I remember thinking, “Now he’s three times my age. I’m one third of him, I’m twenty-five, and he’s seventy-five. Look at all the time that I’ve got!” At the same time feeling like, “I know it’s going to go so quickly, I know it is.”

I can remember the very setting, the day, the time, the place; you know where I was thinking that. It has gone very fast, I can remember in my twenties as a Christian, there was something

special for each year. I had the thought, "I'm going try to remember something about every year." For a quiet while I could, "this was the year that such and such happened. This was the year we went here or there, to this conference, or whatever." Then the years, somehow they pile up, they go on. Things get blurry, it all gets muddled together. You can't remember something from every year, and the children were young. I can hardly believe how quickly the years went by where the children were in the house with us. It's just incredible how it happens, you can't explain it. You can't explain, you cannot lay hold of it, you can't stop it, you can't slow it down. Just all of a sudden, the children are grown up and there moving out, and it's all over. The chapter is closed, and all you can do is make every day count for Christ.

You know the Christian in a way he's living for eternity, he's living for the big picture, he's living for the big things. In a way he's the farthest thing from being an existentialist of anybody but in another way, in a way he's the greatest existentialist. It's like we live for every moment, we live for every day, we want to make every moment count. So, oh, it's like, all we can do is presently walk with God day by day and just be mindful of him continually and that's mere Christianity. It's like, the Lord says in the new covenant, "I'll write My laws in on your mind, I'll put them on your heart." God is the supreme reality. The Christian just walks around naturally mindful of God, a communion with Him. That's the best we can do, that's the most we can do to redeem the time and lay hold on eternal life. When we come to the end, that's what makes our pillow soft - our death bed pillow soft.

You realize that, in a way you've come infinitely short at your best, you come infinitely short of perfection or conformity to Christ or anything that way, you come so short but in another way it's kind of a mystery. You can come to end with some real confidence that, "Lord, I have sought to walk with You. I have loved You. I have tried. I have really given my life to You. I've in some real measure live my life for You, Lord. That is an incredible consolation when you come to the end of your life. It's just an incredible consolation, an incredible sweetness. When you come to the end, you just think, it just comes down to this, "Do I really love Christ or not?" I mean when you boil everything down: Have I loved the Lord or not? Has He been my joy, my glory, my love, my affection, my all in all? If that is real, if you really can say that, you know it, and your conscience bears witness. You can say I've done what I could like Mary, she did what she could. The Lord said that. You know you can look around and you see people that have been more gifted or gifted in other areas and they see more fruit in their life, more fruit in their ministry, and so on. but that's what you've got to have; you got to be able to say, "Lord, I did what I could!" That's beautiful when you can say that before God. What a mercy, what a mercy, what a mercy to come to the end of our lives and know that you're not going to die in your sin. That you're not going to die in your sin, that you're going to die in Christ, and in His righteousness. The songwriter says, "Bold I shall stand on that Great Day." To know that we're going to die with our sins forgiven and we can exclaim, "How blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered!" How extremely blessed, extremely blessed! You know think of that passage in John chapter 8, where the Lord says three times, I think it's in verse 21 and twice in verse 24. "You will seek Me and you'll die in your sins and if you don't believe in Me, you will die in your sins." In the third time, He says, "You will die in your sins."

If you really have eyes to see, you just tremble at the people all around you that you know who are dying in their sins. I know people that died in a car, I know people that died in a house, they died in a hospital. People that died in a fire, people that died in a creek. I heard of one fellow that died in a manure pit. Terrible ways to die but none of that compares to dying in your sin, to die in your sin. Yeah, we die from our sins, "the wages of sin is death." Here, the Lord's saying something a little different, He starts talking about dying in your sin. It's like dying and facing eternity and judgment with this a contraband on you. With this sin on you, the sting of death is sin, that's what makes it so terrible. Admittedly, sin caused death but never the less the thing that makes death so terrible is you got this sin, this guilt. You are in trouble with God, God is going to find this contraband on you, He's going to find this bad record, that's what is so terrible. Men got this idea that they're going to beat God. You know they're going to beat Him, they're going to live their life without God, they're not going to live their life for God, and they're going to die and get by with it but they will not. The Lord Jesus is coming back, He is going to raise the dead, He's going to call everybody before, every knee will bow, every tongue will confess, and truth will come out, and they will be caught in their sins. So to be able to face death in Christ, in His righteousness, that is everything. In a way, that's everything, that's the ultimate. The Lord has given us a high, a holy, a heavenly calling. He's called to His kingdom and glory. That is the end of the Salvation of the Lord is final full redemption.