

WHEN A CHILD GOES TO BE WITH JESUS

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2 Samuel 12:16-23 - “David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground. {17} The elders of his household stood beside him in order to raise him up from the ground, but he was unwilling and would not eat food with them. {18} Then it happened on the seventh day that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, “Behold, while the child was still alive, we spoke to him and he did not listen to our voice. How then can we tell him that the child is dead, since he might do himself harm!” {19} But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead; so David said to his servants, “Is the child dead?” And they said, “He is dead.” {20} So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he came to his own house, and when he requested, they set food before him and he ate. {21} Then his servants said to him, “What is this thing that you have done? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but when the child died, you arose and ate food.” {22} He said, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, that the child may live.’ {23} “But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.”

We should be grateful for this passage of Scripture. It is one of the few places in the Bible where we get a close of view of what happens when a child dies, and ***how a godly, though still imperfect man, reacts to that death.***

I want to touch on ***four lessons from this passage:***

1) **WE KNOW WHERE CHILDREN GO WHEN THEY DIE**

Christian people have found hope in David’s words for generations:

2 Samuel 12:23 - “But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.”

You can’t bring the child back. David knows this. But, fortunately, that’s not the only way for a reunion with that child to take place.

David will get up, he will wash, he will eat, he will continue to live his own life, ***all the while knowing that each day brings him closer to the day he will go to be with his child.*** In other words, time isn’t creating more ***distance*** between him and his child. Each day is ***drawing him closer to his child.***

And we know where the child went because we know where David was going when he died:

Psalm 23:6 - “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, ***And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.***”

“But what about sin, Pastor Don? Doesn’t the Bible say that all children are ***“conceived in sin?”***”

Yes, children are conceived in sin.

“Well then, how can these children, conceived in sin, go to heaven?”

Strong faith needs more than ***sentiment*** to answer that question. We need the profound truth of God’s Word. The Bible talks about that situation very specifically in **Romans 5:12-13**: - “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned-- {13} for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. {14} Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, ***even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.***”

We know from Romans chapter one and chapter two how God judges sin. People are judged for their sin in two ways. People who have the law of God (***the revelation of God’s will in Scripture***) are judged by their disobedience to it.

People who don’t have the law of God or have never heard His message are judged by their failure to keep even the dictates of ***their own conscience.*** Paul says that in this way, all people all over the world are without excuse when they stand before God.

But then he talks about a *third* group of people in **Romans 5:14**. He talks about those who haven't sinned like Adam sinned: **"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come."**

We know how Adam sinned. **Adam disobeyed God.** God told him what he shouldn't do and he did it anyway.

But Paul talks about a group of people who haven't **disobeyed God like that.** They haven't disobeyed the **law of God** and they haven't reached a point of accountability before the **inward law of conscience.** And the only people that can include are **young children** and **people so handicapped they can't judge right from wrong.**

So yes, children **do still die.** Paul says they inherit the **results of sin** even though they haven't participated in the **guilt of sin.** That is, they still **die** but the guilt of sin isn't imputed or counted where there is no law. Here is the loving teaching - the firm, unshakable truth of God's Word - for a time like this. **All children are covered in the atoning blood of Christ until they reach an accountable age where they personally reject and sin against it.**

So David had this confidence - his child was with the Lord. And we have the same confidence today. We can't bring children back. But we can, through the offer of eternal life that comes from Jesus Christ and His death on the cross, go to be with them ourselves.

2) **WE SEE THE WISDOM AND BEAUTY OF HONORING AND WORSHIPING GOD IN THE MIDST OF SORROW AND LOSS**

2 Samuel 12:20 - **"So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the LORD and worshiped."**

O, we know from the way he prayed for that baby to live just how much he grieved. We know how much he missed that child. But, because, as Paul says, we don't sorrow as those who have no hope, we still look to the Lord, centering our hearts on three important areas:

- a) **We honor Him as the one who gives eternal life beyond the grave.** So we thank Him for redemption and heaven and His matchless grace to undeserving people like us.
- b) **We worship Him because He can work all things together for our good as we continue to trust in Him.** He can use all events, including those that are sad and heartbreaking, to somehow glorify Himself and conform us more fully to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.
- c) **We come to Him as the one who give strength beyond our own measure and peace that passes earthly understanding.**

Isaiah 26:3-4 - **"You will keep him in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You. {4} "Trust in the LORD forever, For in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock."**

Isaiah 40:29-30 - **"He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power."**

Psalms 147:3 - **"He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds."**

What beautiful promises to those who stay close to God, who **worship while they bleed.** David keeps the bitterness out of his heart. He doesn't blame God. He doesn't turn away from the people of God. He has found hope even in his tragic loss.

3) **WHEN YOUNG CHILDREN DIE, HOW WILL WE KNOW THEM WHEN WE GET TO HEAVEN?**

Our minds always go to questions like that. We press for details that aren't easily reached. But I do think there are at least some clues in the Scriptures:

Matthew 17:1-4 - **"Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. {2} And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. {3} And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. {4} Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three**

tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

I can't tell you how many times I read that passage before I asked the obvious question, "**How did any of those disciples know who these beings on the mountain were?**" They had certainly never met Moses or Elijah. They had absolutely no way of knowing what they ever looked like. Yet there was this instant recognition.

While I don't want to press things too far, it seems to me that we will have a different way of knowing in heaven. **Probably no one will look exactly the same in heaven.** At least I'm hoping we won't.

But Paul says we will somehow "**know fully, just as we are fully known**" (1 Corinthians 13:12). However it works out, God has thought of all those things. Rest assured, we will know and love each other more deeply and more fully in heaven than we do here.

4) **AFTER ALL THIS IS SAID, WE STILL WONDER WHY THESE THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE. WHY DO YOUNG CHILDREN DIE?**

It really does no good to tell people not to ask **why**. And I don't think it's a bad question. The Bible says Jesus asked that question on the cross - "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**" Question mark. Why is this happening?

Frankly, I think there **are** reasons why young children die. Let's look at two of them:

a) **God uses these events to set our hearts fully eternity and the kingdom to come.**

Shepherds - coming to a tough stretch of pathway. Timid sheep would be afraid to follow. The shepherd would pick up a lamb under each arm and start out himself along the narrow path. The ewes would then follow the lambs and the flock would all follow in turn.

God uses these events to keep us from ever **settling here**. He refuses to let us think this is home. He instills the pilgrim mentality. He draws our hearts to Himself.

Look around this sanctuary. In every row are those who have lost precious loved ones. And I'll tell you what's true of all those hearts here today. They are less and less **settled** in this present world. They don't just miss loved ones. Their **roots in this world are loosened**. That's God's wise grace at work.

b) **Children die to instruct the careless that graves come in all sizes.**

God in His grace reminds everyone here today that life is not only short, **it's shorter than we think**. This service tells each of us that we can't be **careless or casual with eternal issues**. Eternity doesn't just **wait for us**. It **presses in on us**. It makes all earthly concerns small and trite.

Above all, this urgency **should make Jesus stand out**. He is the only Redeemer, the Son of God, the coming judge of the world. And He died never experiencing middle-age.

John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

And the words of Jesus: Matthew 18:10-11 - "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven."