

Dying Words

by J.C. Philpot

A peaceful death is a blessing, not only for the departing but for those who remain behind, as it brings strength and comfort to survivors.

Scripture: Psalm 116:15, Proverbs 16:31, 1 Corinthians 15:55, 2 Timothy 4:7, Hebrews 11:13

Topics: "Dying Well", "Eternal Life"

Description

J.C. Philpot reflects on the solemnity of death, contrasting the final moments of the righteous and the ungodly. He emphasizes the importance of a blessed death, highlighting the significance of dying well as a reflection of one's faith and victory over death. Philpot underscores the lasting impact of dying words, noting how the expressions of a departing believer can profoundly influence the living, serving as seeds of spiritual awakening and transformation.

Transcript

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Death sets a solemn and final stamp on the life. The setting sun casts its expiring rays over air, earth, and sky, and tinges the whole prospect with its peculiar prevailing color. Be that hue lurid and threatening, or be it bright and golden, such also is the general tone and complexion of the landscape. Whatever darkness and gloom, mist and fog, cloud and storm, may have marked the day, a beautiful evening, a bright sunset, makes amends, and stamps its character on the whole. In many a tried, tempted believer has this been spiritually verified. A bright sunset has made amends for a day of mist and fog, cloud and storm.

But ah! how different with the ungodly! When the wicked are in full prosperity they are like a river flowing on to a cataract. We view only the wide, gentle flow of waters dancing and gleaming beneath the sunbeam; and the sound of the cataract in the distance is not heard. We see only how the ungodly spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasure; and we forget the abyss of misery and woe to which they are hastening. When the waters have fallen down the precipice, and we are stunned with the noise and wetted by the spray, we then see the beginning from the end, and how deceitful and perilous was the river's former flow. Their pursuits and pleasures, sins and follies, all come to remembrance, and we see misery and destruction stamped on all their ways, from the cradle to the grave--from the first rise of the rill

to the river's final fall. If connected with us by ties of blood, how painful the thought of their past life and present condition! and if anything particular has marked their end--suddenness or despair, the reflection is too acute to be borne, and it is driven from the mind by any means, if possible.

How different the end of the righteous! Old John Newton, whose remarks usually embody much sound sententious wisdom, used to say, "Don't tell me how the man died; tell me how he lived." There may be some truth in this, but not the whole truth. If it is blessed to live well, it is blessed to die well. If living faith is desirable, is not dying faith desirable? And if victory over the first enemy, unbelief, and over the three middle enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil, is so highly prized as God's gift and faith's conquest, why should not victory over the last enemy, death, be still more highly prized as God's last gift and faith's greatest triumph? It is true that we read in the Scriptures much of the life, but little of the death of Job, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and other saints of old. Stephen's blessed end, and that chiefly as connected with his martyrdom, is, we believe, almost the only happy death specially mentioned in the New Testament. And yet it cannot be denied that a peaceful, happy end is greatly desirable, not only for the departing but for those who remain behind; for strength and comfort to survivor as well as to sufferer. The rays of the Sun of Righteousness, gilding a dying pillow, reflect a blessed light over the whole spiritual life of the departed. If there have been circumstances in life, such as infirmities of temper, errors of judgment, a trying path in providence, a doubting, fearing track in grace, which may have cast somewhat of a shade over him, an end marked beyond contradiction by the power and presence of the God of all grace fully dispels it. Former specks and blemishes are lost in the last flood of light; dubious marks are cleared up; doubts and hesitations are dispersed; and triumphant grace swallows up the last remnant of suspicion. His looks, his words are embalmed in the memory; the tears that flow over him are not bitter and scalding, but soft and tender, mingling holy joy with affectionate sorrow; and his very remains seem consecrated by the spirit--the now glorified spirit, which but yesterday tenanted them. To them affection and respect pay the last services. Faith digs the grave; Hope deposits in it the mortal remains until the resurrection morn; and Love writes the epitaph, on which SUPERABOUNDING GRACE is traced in capitals so large as to leave no space for the small print of the good qualities, or the misprint of the bad qualities of the departed.

Nor does the blessing end when the tomb has closed over the pale, cold relics of mortality. Dying words are remembered; and often, like seeds scattered from a harvested sheaf, afterwards spring up and grow. To many a wild son, to many a thoughtless daughter, have the dying expressions of a believing parent been in after life an awakening voice, and made them to feel that there was a power in that still chamber, a reality in religion on that bed of suffering to which they are strangers. As the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church, so the last life-drops of a dying parent have often not fallen to the ground like water spilled, but have sprung up into a spiritual seed. Samson slew more in death than in all his previous life; and thus many an expiring parent has done more to slaughter a worldly spirit and a worldly religion in the heart of a child by death in faith, than by a whole life of warning and admonition. Dying words are remembered when the living are forgotten!

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