

# The Death of Friends--Awaiting the Sabbath

by John Newton

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*John Newton's sermon emphasizes the comfort found in God's sovereignty and the hope of eternal reunion with loved ones in heaven amidst the pain of loss.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 42:1, Psalm 116:15, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 4:18, Revelation 21:4

**Topics:** "Eternal Life", "Gods Sovereignty"

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## Description

John Newton delivers a sermon comforting the congregation on the passing of Mrs. \*\*\*\* and Mr. T\*\*\*\*, emphasizing the wisdom and sovereignty of God's appointments, assuring that their suffering was purposeful and that they are now in a place of eternal happiness. Reflecting on the brevity of life and the significance of faith in Jesus, Newton encourages a focus on eternal matters rather than temporal concerns. He expresses a longing for deeper communion with God and a thirst for His presence, acknowledging the imperfections of earthly life but finding hope in the promise of an everlasting Sabbath in heaven.

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## Transcript

1774.

The very painful illness which Mrs. \*\*\*\* so long endured had doubtless not only prepared you to expect the news of her dismissal, but made you more willing to resign her. You are bereaved of a valuable friend: but life in her circumstances was burdensome; and who can be sorry to consider her now as freed from all suffering, and possessed of all happiness?

But, besides this, I trust the Lord has favoured you with an habitual sense of the wisdom and propriety of all his appointments; so that when his will is manifested by the event, you are enabled to say, "All is well." "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." She is gone a little before you; and, after a few more changes, you will meet her again to unspeakable advantage, and rejoice together before the Throne for ever. There every tear will be wiped away, and you shall weep no more.

The Lord could have prevented the cause of her great sufferings; but I doubt not he afflicted her in wisdom and mercy: he could easily have restored her to health; but the time was hastening when he purposed to have her with him where he is, that she might behold his glory, and have all the desires he put into her heart abundantly satisfied.

Precious in his sight is the death of his saints, and every circumstance under the direction of Infinite Wisdom. His sovereignty forbids us to say, Why hast thou done this? And his love assures us that he does all things well. I have lost a friend likewise: I believe I may say few persons, not immediately related to her, could value her more highly than myself; and though of late years I could not have the pleasure of her company, it was a constant satisfaction to me to know I had such a friend.

Mr. T\*\*\*\*'s sickness and death followed immediately upon this stroke. I doubt not but you have been much affected with this dispensation likewise. But here again we have the same strong hold to retreat to: The Lord has done it. What a pleasing prospect of increasing usefulness is now interrupted! How many will mourn his loss! Yet we are sure the work which the Lord had appointed him was finished. They who loved his ministry, and were profited by it, are left apparently destitute; but Jesus, the good Shepherd, is able to take care of his own, and will fulfil his promise to them all. He has said, Verily they shall be fed.

We have had trying and dying times here: half my time almost has been taken up with visiting the sick. I have seen death in a variety of forms, and have had frequent occasion of observing how insignificant many things, which are now capable of giving us pain or pleasure, will appear, when the soul is brought near to the borders of eternity. All the concerns which relate solely to this life, will then be found as trivial as the traces of a dream from which we are awakened. Nothing will then comfort us but the knowledge of Jesus and his love; nothing grieve us but the remembrance of our unfaithful carriage to him, and what poor returns we made to his abundant goodness. The Lord forbid that this thought should break our peace! No; faith in his name may forbid our fear, though we shall see and confess we have been unprofitable servants. There shall be no condemnation to them that are in him: but surely shame and humiliation will accompany us to the very threshold of heaven' and ought to do so. I surely shall then be more affected than I am now with the coolness of my love, the faintness of my zeal, the vanity of my heart, and my undue attachment to the things of time. O these clogs, fetters, vales, and mountains, which obstruct my course, darken my views, slacken my pace, and disable me in service! Well it is for me that I am not under the law, but under grace.

To-morrow is the Sabbath. I am usually glad when it returns, though it seldom finds me in that frame of mine which I would desire. But it is my happiness to live amongst many who count the hours from one ordinance to another. I know they pray that I may be a messenger of peace, and an instrument of good to their souls; and I have cause to hope their prayers are in a measure answered. For their sakes, as much as my own, I am glad to go up to the house of the Lord. O that in watering others I may be also watered myself! I have been praying that to-morrow may be a day of power with you and with us, and with all that love Jesus in sincerity; that we may see his glory, and taste his love in the sanctuary! When it is thus, the Sabbath is a blessed day indeed, an earnest of heaven. There they keep an everlasting sabbath, and cease not night or day admiring the riches of redeeming love, and adoring Him who washed his people from their sins in his own blood.

To have such imperfect communion with them as is in this state attainable in this pleasing exercise, is what alone can make life worth the name. For this I sigh and long, and cry to the Lord to rend the vail of unbelief, scatter the clouds of ignorance, and break down the walls which sin is daily building up to hide him from my eyes. I hope I can say, My soul is athirst for God, and nothing less than the light of his countenance can satisfy me. Blessed be his Name for the desire: it is his own gift, and he never gives it in vain. He will afford us a taste of the water of life by the way; and ere long we shall drink abundantly at the fountain-head, and have done with complaint for ever. May we be thankful for what we receive, and still earnestly desirous of more.

I am, &c.

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