

O my son Absalom!

by William MacDonald

Transcript

“O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2 Sam. 18:33)

Whether Absalom was a saved man or not, his father’s wail mirrors the grief of many believers who mourn the death of an unsaved relative for whom they may have prayed for many years. Is there any balm in Gilead for such an occasion? What is the Scriptural attitude to take?

Well, first of all, we cannot always be sure whether the person actually did die without Christ. We have heard of the testimony of one man who was thrown by a horse and who trusted Christ “Between the stirrup and the ground, he mercy sought and mercy found.” Another man slipped off a gangplank and was converted before he hit the water. If either had died in these mishaps, no one would have known that he died in faith.

We believe that it is possible for a person to be saved in a coma. Medical authorities tell us that a person in a coma can often hear and understand what is being said in the room, even if he himself cannot speak. If he can hear and understand, why can he not receive Jesus Christ by a definite act of faith?

But let us suppose the worst. Let us suppose that the person actually did die unsaved. What should be our attitude then? We should very clearly take sides with God against our own flesh and blood. It is not God’s fault if anyone dies in his sins. At stupendous cost, God has provided a way by which people can be saved from their sins. His salvation is a free gift, quite apart from debt or merit. If men refuse the gift of eternal life, what more can God do? He certainly cannot populate heaven with people who don’t want to be there, for then it would not be heaven.

So if some of our loved ones do go into eternity without hope, all we can do is share the grief and heartbreak of the Son of God, who, weeping over Jerusalem, said, “I would but ye would not.”

We know that the Judge of all the earth will do right (Gen. 18:25), so we vindicate Him in the punishment of the lost as much as in the salvation of repentant sinners.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-macdonald/o-my-son-absalom/>

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