

The Right Time to Go To Bed in Christ

I raise the question, what is the purpose of life? Why do men die? When should men die, if ever? The following statement says it was best for some men to die and that is why they died, even when Jesus was here on earth.

"We have united in earnest prayer around the sickbed of men, women, and children, and have felt that they were given back to us from the dead in answer to our earnest prayers. In these prayers we thought we must be positive and, if we exercised faith, that we must ask for nothing less than life. We dared not say, 'If it would glorify God,' fearing it would admit a semblance of doubt. We have anxiously watched those who have been given back, as it were, from the dead. We have seen some of these, especially youth, raised to health, and they have forgotten God, become dissolute in life, causing sorrow and anguish to parents and friends, and have become a shame to those who feared to pray. They lived not to honor and glorify God, but to curse Him with their lives of vice.

"We no longer mark out a way nor seek to bring the Lord to our wishes. If the life of the sick can glorify Him, we pray that they may live; nevertheless, not as we will but as He will. Our faith can be just as firm, and more reliable, by committing the desire to the all-wise God, and without feverish anxiety, in perfect confidence, trusting all to Him" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 2, page 148.

Oh friends, I want to learn right now. That is the simplicity of a little child. When Mother or daddy says to a little child, Darling it is bedtime now, do you know what the little one says? Goodnight. I will see you in the morning. That is trust. That is what God is looking for.

Shall we not pray for the sick? Sure. We should pray for the sick. God told us to. It is safe to do everything He says. But the same God that told us to pray for the sick told us that His will might be done, and to admit, and not be apologetic about admitting, that we don't know enough to know what God's will is in any case. Do you see what I mean? What is the purpose of life anyway?

"A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth" Ecclesiastes 7:1.

Did you know that was in the Bible? He has already told us in the third chapter, the first and second verses, that there is a time for everything and there is a time to die.

Most people think of a birthday as a wonderful day. A child is born. People send out announcements, and congratulations come in. Everybody makes a great ado over it. Three hundred sixty-five days roll by and there is a cake with one candle on it. Everybody is happy. Why? It is a birthday. They are celebrating a birthday. That goes on year after

year. A birthday is a wonderful thing. After all, we wouldn't be here if we hadn't been born, so it is quite important.

But the wise man says there is something better than the day of one's birth. He doesn't say the day of one's birth isn't good. He says there is something better than that. What is it? The day of death.

No wonder God says His thoughts aren't our thoughts. Some of you will agree before we get through this study that there are some things about the day of death that are much better than the day of birth.

"A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity" Ecclesiastes 7:1-7.

There is something about human life, and especially in this modern twentieth century, that wants to keep everything running in a way of laughter and gaiety and mirth, as if that was the great end of life. Some of the highest salaries in this world tonight are paid to comedians. Some of those comedians have ulcers. They get sick and tired of it themselves, but they have to keep it up. That is the way they earn their money.

The wise man (and he had plenty of that to draw on) tasted everything this world had to offer. He says it is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting. He says you will learn something about the meaning of life.

Let's go back to our first verse and see if we can get at the real key, the real germ. "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth." Those two thoughts are linked together. The good name with the day of death.

A name in the Bible stands for character. A person who has developed a good character has accomplished the purpose of life. A person whose name is written in the book of life, never to be blotted out, has accomplished the reason for which he was born. To develop that character is the work of a lifetime. It is the work of life to develop that character, that good name that is better than precious ointment. And when that work is completed, when that character is developed, the great purpose of life has been accomplished as God views it, and it is bedtime.

When everybody in this world has reached that point, we call it the close of probation. But most of the people who have ever lived in this world have had their probation closed by death. Very few people have ever closed their probation until death. Death marks the close of probation for nearly all who have ever lived in this world.

Let's look at the close of probation for a minute. You and I look forward to the close of probation, and we know that at that time he that is just will be just still, and he that is righteous will be righteous still. I want to ask you something. When the saints are all numbered and sealed and probation is closed, would you pray to stay in this world another hundred years? Fifty years? Ten years?

What would you pray? To get out as quick as possible, because the reason for being here has been accomplished.

Could that be just as correct with a person that reached the point where God saw he was ready to close his probation before the world as a whole closed its probation? Yes friends, it could.

If Hezekiah had died when God told him to set his house in order, for the time had come for him to die, Hezekiah would have been saved in the kingdom of God. Not only that, but a lot of trouble would have been saved to Judah and the kingdom.

I repeat, the great purpose in life is to develop a good character, a good name. Do you know why that is the great purpose? I will tell you. Heaven keeps a school, a university of the universe, and God is looking for students to enter that higher course of education. But you must have your credits. You must pass your entrance examinations in this life. The great purpose in life is to get to the place where you can pass those examinations.

That's why we haven't time to spend with a lot of subjects we can't take with us. That is why the Spirit of Prophecy says that we should weed out of our courses the things students can't take to the higher school. We need all our time to spend on the things that are required for admission there.

Some people are so busy getting the things that are required for admission here that they altogether lose sight of the things that are required for admission there. Here is a person. He lives a certain length of life, and all the while heaven is superintending his education, not merely in books but in life, for that is what life is. Life is the great preparatory course in the education of eternity. Finally that individual gets to the place where God, looking upon him, says he is ready. I can admit him now to the higher school. God says to that man, I am ready now for you to close your probationary period.

What difference does it make whether the thing that closes that man's course is an automobile hitting him on the highway or the germ of tuberculosis or cancer, or any one of ten thousand other things? I say this not thoughtlessly nor heartlessly. In the great law of eternity, if he is ready and heaven's time has come for him to close his schoolwork here, the important thing to remember is the vital thing in all I am studying. A man may be ready one time and not ready another time.