

The Dead yet speaketh

by Evangelist Dea Warford

"The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Gen. 4:10), God told Cain after he killed Abel. Spilled Blood represents death. And, it has something to say too. Abel's blood spoke to God! Hebrews 11:5 says, "he (Abel) being dead yet speaketh". Abel's death testified of His righteousness and speaks words of inspiration even today! Death is not the end of our works. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14:13). Our good works, prayers, and accomplishments continue even after we die. In what ways do works "follow" us?

There is probably not a person reading this who hasn't thought "who would help my children or grandchildren if I died?" or "Who would pray wayward family members into the kingdom?" I once met a man who told me about his grandmother. She lived into her 90's. He said when he was little and playing in the yard, she would pick him up and put him on her lap and pray long prayers over him. As he grew older, though, he chose not to serve the Lord. About a month after his grandmother's death, he told his wife, "you know, we ought to start going to church to honor grandmother." They did, got saved, and I met them at the Assembly of God church in Cheyenne, Wyoming where they attend. This grandmother's prayers truly "followed" her, even after death. Death does not end our influence on earth!

Every now and then, I meet someone who says that their dead and departed husband or child visits them at times and they will talk with them or feel their presence in the room. I am very suspect of such "visitations", knowing demons like I do. We are NOT to seek to seek to communicate with the dead. This is necromancy and forbidden by God (Deut. 18:9-12).. This is what modern conjurers do in seances. However, there are nevertheless exceptions to the rule and scriptural precedence for a dead loved one on rare occasions visiting the living, thus still influencing earth Moses did (Matt. 17:13). Samuel rose from his "quietness" to speak to Saul (I Sam. 28:15), thus still prophesying, though dead, as he foretold Saul's impending death and David's ascension to the throne.

My neighbor, Eke, is a minister, has an M.A. degree from ORU and is a mighty prayer warrior. He prays hours daily. He fasts. God has sent angels to visit him. (The first time, he ran frightened out of the room! Ha, ha) One time he was thinking of going on for more education before he entered the ministry full-time, "just in case" he couldn't make it financially. God gave him a vision of an old man, while Eke was in his dormitory room, who said, "I am Lester Sumrall. I died recently, and God sent me from heaven to tell you to trust him." When the man left, Eke went immediately to inquire who Lester Sumrall was. He was surprised to discover that he was a nationally known tele-evangelist, author and pastor who had recently died. An extraordinary event, for sure, but I see no reason to believe that God wouldn't do this to keep Lester Sumrall's works following him even after death and to give Eke an unforgettably impacting sign to pursue his ministry, even as Moses post-mortem appearance to Jesus bore witness to the disciples of the importance of Christ's ministry and death on the cross (Lu. 9:31).

Don't write me any angry letters asking to be removed from my mailing list! Bear with me and continue with my line of reasoning. We hear or read stories all the time of people who died on an

operating table, visited heaven or hell and came back. If they can come back from the realm of eternity after being dead 5 or 10 minutes, I would think they could after 5 or 10 years, again though, exceptionally!

Heb. 12:1 says, "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily best us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us". This verse obviously is saying that we are to be encouraged in our Christian life to follow on with the same example of faith and faithfulness that the "Hall of fathers" exemplified in Heb. 11. However, many believe that the Holy Spirit chosen phrase "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" hints that those who died and have gone before us are actually viewing our progress from heaven "rooting" us on.

Anybody reading this would have to admit that dead people still influence the world through their genes passed on to others, through their teachings and example, through their sermons and books or tapes. But, way beyond this, there is also fascinating scriptural evidence that things are even going on beyond the grave that are influencing us here on earth. One of the more memorable examples is seen in the fact that Elisha's anointing he had while living was still present in his dead bones, as a dead man who had been lowered into his grave came to life again after touching his bones (1 Kings 13:21). Elisha's "works followed him"!

I have been asked if I think people who have died know what is going on earth. Though I don't believe (like the Catholics) that the dead watch over us and protect us or that we can pray to them and they answer our prayers, I do believe God gives them some knowledge, if not complete, of earthly events. My cousin, Brian Harris, had a dream. In the dream, he was in heaven and he was introducing his father, J.R. Harris (who died in a car accident in 1971), to his current step-father, Al Smith. Brian told his birth father, J.R., "Al was my step father on earth." Shortly after that dream, Brian died of a heart attack, a young man in his 40's, and a year or so later, his step father, Al Smith, died also of a heart attack. I believe that his dream was exactly the way it happened in heaven.

Now, if God could so clearly communicate to one of his children what was soon to happen in heaven (and on earth by their passing), don't you think a loving God would be just as apt to communicate with those in heaven of what is now happening or going to happen on earth? Evidence of this is seen in Rev. 6:10 where Martyrs of the faith, now in heaven, ask God, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, doest thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on earth?" Do you think they spoke these words from their confinement in windowless, soundproofed mansions in heaven? Or, more likely, were they speaking from their heavenly vantage point clearly observing events of the book of Revelation being unveiled on earth? I think it is more likely the later.

I'm going somewhere with this! I don't believe in speculative doctrine just to scintillate and fascinate. I believe there is an important, practical, and applicable truth here. We are the living and death speaks to the living. It was the death of two wives and my father that finally got my brother's attention, and led him on the path that at last resulted in him getting saved at the age of 66! I've seen death's impact on the living in over 300 funerals I have performed. If God was trying to get our attention by death, he did a good job! Death says "prepare yourself for this". Death says, "there's more to life than what you are pursuing". Jim Carrey, the comedian who gets paid 20 million or more

for every movie he makes, was reported in the March 2006 issue of the Reader's Digest as saying, "I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that's not the answer". Death SCREAMS to the living that "money, pleasure and fame is not the answer!" Death has inspired people to live rightly. And death has inspired people to die rightly.

During the first world war, one Major John McCrae, a Canadian physician, had endured in France what he reported was "seventeen days of Hades" as he doctored the screaming, bleeding and suffering wounded soldiers. One death really touched him-the death of a friend, Lieutenant Alexis Helmer. Alexis was killed by a shell burst May 1, 1915 and was buried that same day in a little cemetery near where Dr. McCrae attended the wounded. In the absence of a chaplain, Dr. McCrae performed the funeral service for his friend.

The next day, sitting on the back of an ambulance, Dr. McCrae wrote a poem while viewing the cemetery where his friend and many other fallen soldiers had been buried. From time to time, his eyes would stray to the grave where his friend Alexis had been buried. A soldier, Cyril Allinson, who had come to deliver mail, watched Dr. McCrae writing and would later report, "the poem was an exact description of the scene in front of us both. He used the word 'blow' in that line because the poppies actually were blown that morning by a gentle east wind. It never occurred to me at that time that it would ever be published. It seemed to me just an exact description of the scene."

The poem was almost never published. Perhaps angry at the cruelty of death or maybe dissatisfied with his humble talents, the Dr. tossed the poem away. But, a fellow officer picked it up, was impacted by it, and sent it to England. One newspaper rejected it. But, a newspaper called Punch published it Dec. 8, 1915. It became perhaps the best known and memorable war poem ever written. It's called ...

In Flanders Fields

by Lt. Col. John McCrae, MD

*In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks; still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.
Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

Brave soldiers in WW1 took the torch from these dead soldiers in hand, holding it high indeed, and joined the battle, many of them doubtless inspired by this poem. Death inspired a life, which inspired a poem, which inspired further death, which resulted in more life Death spoke again!

The phrase in this poem, "If ye break faith with us who die, We shall not sleep" reminds us of an awesome prophecy. The previously mentioned martyrs who cried out to God, "how long" were told to "rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (Rev. 6:11). There is no conjecture now! This is a Biblical view of the last days!

Martyrs for the cause of Christ will be anxious for swift justice on earth. But, they will be told to rest until the other last day martyrs should join them. Here is where you and I fit in. Dietrich Boenhoffer, the German theologian who was hanged for his attempts to assassinate Adolf Hitler, wrote a book entitled "Discipleship". In that book he wrote, "Wherever Christ calls us, his call leads us to death". He felt his love of the Jews demanded he risk his life to stop their slaughter. Are you His disciple? If so, your personal call will always call you to death too: death to pride, to lust, or death to ambition.

Death tells on you! How you die really proves how you lived. In fact, the impact of your life, can best be measured by the impact of your death. Stanley Livingstone, the great explorer/ missionary, kissed his wife good-bye on 2 occasions and headed for Africa. She didn't hear from him for years and she didn't know if he was dead or alive. Stanley had such a burden for Africa, that he asked this favor: "bury my heart in Africa." After he died, natives carried his body by hand over a thousand miles, so that it could be shipped to England for burial. Other natives they met along the way scoffed at them that they would take such pains to carry the man so far. Their reply was, "but this is a BIG man!". How big you are at death is how big you are in life.

There is a movie out I recommend all to see. Titled, "End of The Spear", it's inspired from actual events. In 1956, five missionaries went to the jungles of Ecuador to preach the gospel to previously un-reached Indian tribes. They would fly in to remote areas in a light airplane, taking food and gifts to try to gain their friendship. But, these Indians were reputed to be very dangerous. The missionaries had pistols, but knew they could never use them if attacked, because they were saved, but the Indians were lost. After just a few trips in, and before any kind of real missionary work was established, they were all brutally attacked and shot by arrows and spears and martyred. (The book "Through Gates of Splendor" tells the full story, written by Elizabeth Elliot, one of the missionary's widows).

Later, some of the wives of these fallen missionaries went back to live among the same Indians that bereaved them of their husbands and left their children fatherless. Many of these Indians were converted to Christ, and one Indian that helped kill the missionaries, become a preacher of the gospel. The killers of the missionaries later reported seeing people in the sky singing at the very moment they were murdering them. Were these angels? Or perhaps the "great cloud of witnesses"? Jesus surely stood up from his throne to receive their departed spirits as He did for Stephen the first martyr of the church (Acts 7:56). Meanwhile, from the grave, the blood of these brave missionaries began to speak.

Life Magazine prominently featured an article about their death. Their story then spread throughout the body of Christ resulting in youth from across America pledging themselves as missionaries to reach those still un-reached by their fallen co-laborers. Foreign missions received a great inspirational boost as new money, new prayers, and new soldiers of the cross began to "take up our quarrel with the foe: to you from failing hands we throw The torch; be yours to hold it high" They didn't "break faith " with those missionary martyrs who now rest in peace with the knowledge from heaven that their labor was not in vain in the Lord.

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12:24). We can "die daily" like Paul (1 Cor. 15:31) or we can die but once. But, whether it is a daily death to selfish pursuits, or one final act of martyrdom in the last days, may our death "speak" to both inspire the living and, like Abel, "speak" to the Lord himself, that He might find us righteous in life and in death!