

REVELATION – SERMON 57

THE BLESSED DEAD

Revelation 14:12-13

INTRODUCTION

- Most people have confused concept of what it means to be *blessed*
- Many professing Christians have a shallow understanding of God's blessing, seeing it merely as being favourable events and circumstances in life
- Yet the Biblical description of God's blessing goes much deeper than good health and financial prosperity
- The beatitudes describe the blessed as being the poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek, they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted for righteousness' sake, and those who are reviled for Christ's sake (Matthew 5:3-11)
- Most people would not think of the poor in spirit, mourners and the persecuted as being blessed, but in God's eyes, they are, and in the eternal scheme of things they will be proven to be blessed.
- The Greek word for blessed is *makarios* and means happy, blissful, contented of heart
- For many, happiness depends upon happenings and outward circumstances, and is a positive feeling that flows from them
- But blessedness describes one's state of being in relation to God, independent of one's feelings
- To be blessed to be in God's favour, a recipient of his grace and mercy
- There are many scriptures that describe the man who is blessed of the LORD: He trusts in God (Psalm 2:12; 34:8; 84:12; Jeremiah 17:7); he fears God (Psalm 112:1; 115:13); he seeks God (Psalm 119:1-2); he believes in the risen Christ (John 20:29); his sins are forgiven (Psalm 32:1-2); he hears God's word and keeps it (Luke 11:28; John 13:17); he is separate from sinners (Psalm 1:1); he delights in, and meditates upon, God's word (Psalm 1:2)
- There are seven beatitudes in the Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14)
- The only people who are blessed in this life and the next, are God's people, and none else

- In the preceding verses, the three angels pronounced to the earth-dwellers during the tribulation of the awful judgment of God upon unbelievers
- Now, in contrast to the cowardice, disobedience and infidelity of the beast-worshippers, we are shown in these verses the perseverance, obedience, and faithfulness of the saints
- In contrast to the torment without rest the ungodly will suffer in the lake of fire under God's wrath, here we see the blissful rest the saints will enjoy in heaven under God's favour

I. THE SAINT'S BLESSED LIFE OF ENDURING GRACE (12)

A. A word of encouragement

1. This verse appears to be John commenting by the Spirit, rather than the words of the third angel (cf. 13:10,18; 17:9)
2. Believers in the great tribulation can be encouraged that it is far better to suffer the beast's persecution and even martyrdom, than to suffer God's wrath

B. The patience of the saints

1. This word means constancy, endurance, perseverance, patient continuance
2. The tribulation will work patience in the lives of the saints (Romans 5:3)
3. Every believer is an *overcomer* and will ultimately be glorified (1 John 5:5; Romans 8:30)
4. Those who have genuine faith will not depart from the faith and apostatise (1 John 2:19)
5. Faithful perseverance is a mark of a true believer (Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Hebrews 3:14)
6. It is by God's power that the work of grace begun in justification continues in sanctification and is completed in glorification (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24)

C. The obedience of the saints

1. Saving faith is evidenced by works (Luke 6:46; James 2:18; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-12)

D. The faith of the saints

1. Jesus is the object of this faith
2. The Christian lives by this faith (Galatians 2:20)

3. The Christian keeps this faith (2 Timothy 4:7)
4. The Christian dies in this faith (Hebrews 11:13)

II. THE SAINT'S BLESSED DEATH OF EVERLASTING GLORY (13)

A. A voice from heaven

1. This may be God or an angel
2. The command to write is further confirmation that these words are given by inspiration of God (cf. 1:11,19; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5)

B. The blessing on the dead

1. This applies firstly to the martyrs who will be killed in the latter part of the tribulation ("from henceforth")
 - a. Those who worship not the beast will be put to death (13:15)
 - b. There will be multitudes of saints killed (6:9,11; 20:4)
 - c. The whore will be drunk with saints' blood (17:6; 18:24)
2. Yet all those who have died and who will die "in the Lord", are blessed also (1 Corinthians 15:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:14,16)
 - a. This text is often used at Christian funerals
 - b. Those who die in war are sometimes remembered as *the glorious dead*, but those who die in the Lord are truly THE GLORIOUS DEAD
 - c. "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." (Psalm 116:15)

C. The Spirit's confirmation

1. Though the Holy Spirit be taken out of the way in his withholding capacity at the time of the Rapture, yet he will continue his ministry of reproof, illumination, conviction, regeneration, comfort and empowerment during the tribulation
2. Through the Spirit's enabling, the martyrs will maintain their testimony of Christ even unto death (Matthew 10:19-20)

D. They rest from their labours

1. The word for "labours" (*kopon*) denotes "toils and wearinesses", and is contrasted with "works" (*erga*)

2. At the moment of death, the believer enters into a state of rest in the paradise of heaven with Christ (Daniel 12:13; Luke 16:25; 23:43; Hebrews 4:9-11; Revelation 6:11; 7:14-17)
3. Scriptures such as this refute the heresies of “purgatory” and “soul sleep” (see 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21-23)

E. Their works follow them

1. It is certain that we can carry nothing with us out of this world (Psalm 49:17; Ecclesiastes 5:15; 1 Timothy 6:7)
2. Yet the believer *can* bring something with him into the next world – his *works*
3. Believers will be judged and rewarded for their works done in Christ’s name and for his sake (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)
 - a. In this life we lay up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21)
 - b. We sow now, so that we reap later (Galatians 6:9)
 - c. That inheritance is “incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4)
4. The souls we win to Christ will also follow us and be a “crown of rejoicing” at Christ’s coming (1 Thessalonians 2:19)
5. The “crown of life” is promised to those saints who maintain their love to Christ through tribulation and martyrdom (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10; cf. 4:10)

CONCLUSION

1. The ideal death for most people would be a painless one, in their old age
2. There is only one type of death that has a happy ending; that marks the entrance into eternal bliss, that is the death of the *righteous* (Numbers 23:10)
3. If a man does not die with righteousness, then he dies in his sins and is lost forever
4. Will you die “in your sins” (John 8:21), or “in the Lord” (14:13)?
5. “Death to the Christian is the funeral of all his sorrows and evils, and the resurrection, of all his joys.” — James H. Aughey)
6. When you stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, what works will follow you there?

*Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
 Only what's done for Christ will last.*
 — C T Studd)