

MEMORIAL MESSAGE FOR DONALD DEAN NICHOLS

“The Secret Place Of The Most High” – Psalm 91: 1,2

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Opening Scripture: Psalm 91:1-2

He who dwells in the secret place or the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I will trust.

We gather here this morning to honor the precious memory of Donald Dean Nichols. We also gather here to comfort you, Garnet, and all those of you who are in the extended Nichols family. We come in Jesus' Name, to comfort all of you who are Don's friends. Your presence here today is undergirding Garnet and Dawn and Tonya and Denise and Paula and Luella and Joan and Diana and Max and all the rest of you. We are here today to hear what God wants to say to us through His holy Word about the realities of life, of death, and of eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ.

We must remember that Don's life has not ended; no, not at all. Don's life did enter into a new dimension of life eternal in heaven one week ago this afternoon, last Wednesday, April 5, 2011. Life never ends in death. The Bible teaches us that we all will live forever in one of two places, either in God's eternal heaven if we know the Lord as Don came to know Him, or in the lake of fire, in eternal hell if we refuse to repent, believe and receive Jesus, the only begotten Son of God. I can testify to you all today that Don Nichols died, dwelling in the secret place of the Most High God. He died in the shelter of Almighty God. God sent His angels to carry Don's soul and spirit Home safe to His arms on April 5th.

We are going to miss Don more than this preacher can say, more than we can conceive in our minds. Don was close to our hearts. To find the proper words is so difficult at a time like this. Words seem so inadequate, so incomplete. Yet, what we all need at a time like this is God's revelation, so much more than just our own words. We need God's Word that speaks of eternal certainties, not just empty hopes or dreams. That's what we have in the Word of God. We need words that speak with divine authority. That's what we have in the Bible. We need words that provide God's divine true comfort, words that focus our minds on Who to believe in, and Who to trust as we attempt to go on from here. That's what we have—that's Who we have in the Book of Books, the Bible and Who we have in the King of Kings

and Lord of Lords. We all need more than sincere expressions of sympathy and concern, as wonderful as those words are, in a time of sorrow and death. We need the authoritative, comforting word of the Lord—God's "Thus saith the Lord!" -- revelation of Scripture. The Word of God is our greatest comfort in this time of need.

A couple weeks ago, Don looked at me as I spoke with him about being my new brother. He looked into my eyes and asked me a probing question. He asked me, "Do you believe every single word in that Book, and he pointed to my Bible?" I told him I did believe every single word in this Book. But I hurried on to say, "Don, I don't know if there is a man or woman alive who knows the Lord as personal Savior as you do, who hasn't momentarily entertained a doubt or fear in their mind. I told Don about a man in the Gospel of Mark 9: 14-27. The account tells of a man who asked Jesus' disciples to cast out a demon from his son. The demon or spirit made his son mute. Whenever the demon seized his son, his son would be dashed to the ground. He would foam at the mouth, grind his teeth, and stiffen out. The disciples tried to cast out the demon and they could not do it. So the disciples brought the boy and his dad to Jesus. When the boy saw Jesus, the Bible says, "Immediately, the spirit threw the boy into a convulsion. Falling to the ground, he began rolling about and foaming at the mouth." Jesus asked the father, "how long has this been happening to your son?" The daddy responded, "Since he was a child. And the spirit has often thrown my son into the fire and into the water to try to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

Jesus said to the Dad, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately, the boy's father cried out and began saying, "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief." Then I read, "And when Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." And after crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, the spirit came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" But Jesus took the boy by the hand and raised him up, and the boy got up." He was delivered and very much alive. I told Don that Jesus told His disciples that if they had faith as of a tiny grain of a mustard seed, they could remove mountains. (Matthew 17: 20) I asked Don if he knew about a mustard seed, how tiny it was. Don told me he knew how small a mustard seed is. I told Don that when he received the Lord as his personal Savior a few weeks before, God gave him the seed of faith, a

mustard seed of God's divine gift of faith. By God's amazing grace, through faith, Jesus cleansed Don from all his past sin.

I told Don that when he found himself doubting, he should talk to Garnet and ask her to pray with him that God would remove his doubts and strengthen his faith. Garnet had stepped out of the hospital room for a few moments, but now she was back. I know she heard me encouraging Don. When Don was ready, a week ago last Sunday, to stop the oxygen treatments and to go home to die, God had removed his doubts. His doubts were settled. God gave Don a mustard seed of His gift of faith to believe that dying and going to be with Jesus would be far better than fighting to breathe. Don now knows without even a shadow of a doubt, that God honored his mustard seed of faith. Don is Home with Jesus this morning. Never will Don ever struggle with another doubt for all eternity. Don died and went home to Jesus trusting in God, trusting Him under the shadow of the Almighty. Don went Home taking his last breaths in the secret place of the Most High.

Death is more than death, for the Lord Jesus Christ conquered death, for Himself, and for all of us who trust in Him. That's the resurrection we will again celebrate a week from this coming Sunday. Jesus said, in John 11: 25, 26, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believeth in Me, though He were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Do you believe Jesus' words? Don chose to believe God's word.

When Don said, "Garnet, "Let's go home, set up hospice and put it into the Lord's hands!"—he was trusting in the Lord's Word. That brings me then to our text where the psalmist said so beautifully, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge, and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust." Don was hiding in the Lord when he asked Garnet to take him home to die. Why would Don say that? What had Don found in Jesus in this last month of his earthly life? He found the Lord as his Hiding Place? I see in this little text in Psalm 91: 1,2 three personal possessions Don had. All of us who believe in Jesus can find the same personal possessions when we run to hide in Jesus. We can find in Jesus a resting place to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. As we examine this message from Psalm 91: 1,2, what are these 3 personal possessions Don found?

I WILL SAY OF THE LORD—MY REFUGE. (L) The Hebrew word for refuge is **machaceh**. It means a place of shelter and refuge to which we can

flee for protection. It is often used in scripture figuratively of a place underneath God's wings. Don found this place of shelter and refuge. Is Jesus your place of shelter where you run for protection and shelter? Have you come to receive Jesus? Are you abiding in Him? Can you say of the Lord, "my refuge"? There's a second personal possession Don found in the Lord:

I WILL SAY OF THE LORD—MY FORTRESS. (II.) This psalm is all about God's protection of us. The Hebrew word for fortress is **matsuwd**. Don knew the Lord as his fortress. Matsuwd means a stronghold of defense within a castle. Psalm 91 is about God's protection. We are all immortal here until our work is done. April 5th, Don's earthly work was done.

When the Lord graduates us to glory, don't mistake God's means of graduation through death as abandoning us without a fortress. Never! When our hour is come, and it is appointed unto man once to die, God does not abandon us. Never! God sends His angels to bear our souls and spirits up to Him. Don never lost his refuge and fortress when he died. No, he inherited in dying, the walled city of heaven—with 12 gates to the city—3 to the north, 3 to the south, 3 to the east and 3 to the west—where John declares to us in Revelation 21:27, "And nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." Revelation 22:14 adds to the joy of that fortress Don is now within. "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city." Can you say, "Jesus is my fortress, my city of peace, my walled defense, my protection until He calls me Home to His eternal fortress? Don had one last personal possession in the Lord.

I WILL SAY OF THE LORD—MY GOD. (III.) The words are, "I will say of the Lord, my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him will I trust." God speaks of a personal relationship with Him which is like the 23rd psalm that calls the Lord "my Shepherd." But here He is "my God" for Don. Is the Lord "my God for you?" God honored His promise to Don in the last days of his life. On April 5th, in Don's death, and now in eternity, those promises to Don are yes and yes, sir, in Christ Jesus. The comfort I bring to you Garnet and to you as the Nichols family is: Don is Home with the Lord, his refuge, his fortress, his God, in whom he trusted. Are you prepared to live someday with Don in heaven? Can you say of the Lord, "He is my refuge, my fortress, my God, in Him I will trust?" Bow your heads. Let's pray—I now invite you as Don did, to repent, believe and receive Jesus by faith.

Benediction:

Dear Father, we close this memorial service for Donald Dean Nichols with this final committal.

Forasmuch then as it has pleased our Heavenly Father, in His wise providence, to take unto Himself our beloved Donald Dean Nichols, we commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, looking for the blessed Hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who shall change the body of our humiliation and fashion it anew in the likeness of His own body of Glory, according to the working of His mighty power, wherewith He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

And now, “The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you. The Lord be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace, comfort, and eternal hope until we awake in Christ’s likeness and the Day dawns and these shadows flee away. For we pray in the mighty Name of the Father, and of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, Three in One, Amen and Amen.”