

**Revelation 14: 13; “Blessed are the Dead”, Sermon # 108 in the Series –
“The Faithful and True Witness”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
On September 4th, 2011, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

The words of this text need to be understood in the context of the rest of this Chapter. If you will recall, I told you in previous sermons that Chapter 14 is a turning point in the history of the Church. I believe that it is speaking about the time period of the Reformation, when Christ’s people sang a New Song before the throne of God. They were praising Him for the rediscovery of the truth of the gospel; the rediscovery of the Bible, and the truth of salvation in Christ alone. They were praising God for the greater illumination of the truth, which had come to their minds and their hearts; through hearing the preaching of His blessed Word, through men like John Wycliffe and John Huss, and Luther and Calvin. God was bringing His people out of the Antichristian darkness; into which the Church had slipped and fallen, in those years from 757 A.D to the time of the Reformation. Many people have suffered and died during the whole history of the Church so that the truth of the gospel and the Word of God might prevail on the earth. And so this afternoon we want to understand what a blessed thing it is to die in the Lord; not only the martyrs dying; but also the rest of God’s people dying and going to be with Christ as well. Dying; for God’s dear people means 3 things. 1st - When you die, as a sufferer for Jesus, your name will written down as forever blessed. Second – When you die, you will rest from your labors. And thirdly – Your works would follow you.

1st of all - When you die, as sufferer for Jesus, your name will written down as forever blessed.

Our verse 13 follows the words that say, “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. Now “those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus Christ”, could be applied to every Christian who has taken their stand for truth, during the whole of the Church age, not just those in the time period of the 1260 years. If we were to turn back to Chapter 7, we would see that during the first and second time periods of Church History there were also 144,000 sealed before those time periods began. God has His Elect in every generation of the Church. But the book of Revelation clearly speaks of these different periods of time within the whole church age. It speaks of the period of the persecuting Emperors in Chapters 6 and 7, which is the first period. (96 A.D. to 325 A.D.) And it speaks of the battle of the Church with the introduction of the false doctrines of Arianism, Pelagianism, Nestorianism, and Sabellianism, in the second time period in Chapter 8. And then it goes on to speak of the rise and the establishment of the Papal Antichrist in Chapter 9. In Chapter 10, we find John given the “little book” which gives the Church the overview of the 1260 days prophecy, concerning

Antichrist and how he would be defeated by Christ and His Church. During all 3 of these time periods there have been times when the true believers and true churches in Christ were persecuted, and when they died “in the Lord”. They died holding fast and holding forth the truth of the living, risen Christ as the only Savior of sinners, and His Word as the only standard of truth. This verse that we are studying could apply to any faithful believing person, who suffered for Christ, was persecuted and died for Christ, during any of these three time periods.

So the question that we need to ask ourselves is this; why is this verse which we are studying placed here? I believe that it was placed here so that those who were suffering for the sake of the truth under Antichrist, in particular, could bear up under their sufferings, even unto death, and look forward to what death would mean for them. “Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on.” (from henceforth) From the time of the Reformation forward to the end of the age; the central truths of the gospel of Christ’s kingdom; the truth that the Bible is the Word of God which defines for us how God is to be worshiped and served; and the truth of how men are saved by grace through faith; these precious truths would never again be lost to the extent that they had been lost before; as they had been in the dark times that went before the Reformation. Those truths would advance, and they will advance further yet, by the labors of those who are willing to lay down their life for them. From then on; from the time of the Reformation; the truth, although greatly suppressed at times, would continue to be held to, and proclaimed by many of God’s saints. And through the faithfulness of our God, and the labors of these many faithful saints, Christ’s Church will eventually be brought to the place where she will be prepared to conquer with the gospel, among the Nations, during the 4th time period of Church history, which is yet coming; the Millennium.

“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’” As we look at the context, the dead that are directly being talked about are those who patiently endured these sufferings which came to them because they did not worship the beast or his image; because they did not receive a mark on their forehead or on their hand. They did not submit to Popes and Bishops and Priests. They would not worship the image of the beast; that is they did not submit to the teaching of Rome as is laid out in the Council of Trent. They did not receive the mark of the beast; the baptism of the church of Rome and partaking of their false sacraments. They, rather, kept the commandments of God which they found in the Bible, and had their faith in Jesus alone for their salvation. They took their stand with Christ. In verse 1 we find the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, standing on Mt. Zion (on the labors of His faithful witnesses); standing with His Elect people; symbolized by the 144,000. This number is a number representing all the Elect people of the third time period of Church History, who suffered in their witness for Him against the false doctrine of Rome; this false Church which has been significantly hindering the true Church’s

advance in all the world. The 144,000 are the believers who have suffered, and not a few who have died, during the time of the 1260 days (or years) prophecy. They are virgins in terms of receiving Rome's doctrine. They will not commit spiritual fornication with her. We are still living in those times. These 144,000 are still representing the symbolic number of the people who have had to face and deal with the persecuting malice and opposition of Antichrist. In our day, we are facing a somewhat different form of persecution than the saints did in the time of the Reformation, and we will talk about this in coming sermons.

But the Antichristian forces are those persons who support, and submit to, the false authority of Popes. And the long line of Popes have been those who spoke their false doctrines of the Mass and purgatory and many other false doctrines into existence; and then pronounced those who did not believe in them, to be heretics. During this time period before and during the Reformation, many people took their stand for the truth of the Bible. And many were persecuted, and many died. Andrew Fuller in his Exposition of the Apocalypse says this: "In reviewing the dark ages of popery, we are apt to think there could have been but few who clave to the truth in those times; but if the Christian world were again put to such a test of their sincerity, it were well if the number of the faithful proved greater than in those days." "Joseph Mede hath observed from good authorities, that in the war with the Waldenses and Albigenses there perished in France alone a million: the first institution of the Jesuits to the year 1480, that is in a little more than thirty years, nine hundred thousand." "In the Netherlands alone, the duke of Alva boasted that within a few years he had despatched (killed) to the amount of 36,000, and those all by the hand of the common executioner." "In the space of scarcely thirty years the inquisition destroyed by various kinds of tortures, one hundred and fifty thousand." "Saunders, himself a popish writer, confesses that an innumerable multitude of Lollards and Sacramentarians were burnt throughout all Europe; who yet, he says, were not put to death by the pope and bishops, but by the civil magistrates." "That is, the secular beast did the work, and the ecclesiastical only caused it!" So we see, that there have been many, many people who died in the past, taking their stand for the truth of the Word of God, against the Antichrist which is Papal Rome. Their name is blessed, and they are written down in the Lamb's book of life.

Now Secondly – When you die, as one who has suffered for and with Jesus, you will rest from your labors.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors." It appears from the context, once again, that the labors of the people being described; have been in witnessing to the truth of what true worship is, and what it means to be a true and faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is rest for your spirit, dear believer, to be found in the very presence of Jesus, when you have been faithful to speak for, and live for His truth. This, apparently, is the greatest of blessings for those who have labored and

suffered and died for Christ. The blessing of Christ is upon them, in a great and special way, in heaven now, and in the eternal state. They will have a greater reward than other believers who did not suffer as much for His cause. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." To be one who has suffered for Christ, because of many labors in relation to Christ's cause and kingdom of truth and righteousness; and then to die; it is the most blessed thing that a Christian can think of. It is a rest which the weary and suffering Christian looks forward to. You can see this if you will turn over to Philippians Chapter 1, verse 15. Paul was sitting in prison, for the sake of the gospel. And while he was there, he heard that there were people preaching Christ, who were doing so for selfish and sinful reasons. He says here, "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel." "What then?" "Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice." "For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death." For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." This was how Paul looked at it, from his own standpoint. He thought of laboring for Christ and suffering in those labors so that Christ would be magnified. But he also looked forward to the rest from those labors. Listen to verse 22. "But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell." "For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." "Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you." Are you laboring for Christ, my dear brother or sister? Are you laboring in prayer that you might speak of Christ to others; relatives, friends, co-workers, and people you may happen to meet? Do you suffer in some ways, in your reputation with them, when you do so? Persevere on; labor, spend and be spent. There is rest at the end of your days. There is more than a clear conscience that awaits. It is real rest in the arms of Jesus; the spirit of a just man or woman, made perfect; and the anticipation of the "well-done my good and faithful servant". There is no rest for the wicked, but there is for the righteous. "It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 1: 6-8)

Now most of us, who are listening to this sermon, or reading it right now, are not suffering for the sake of Christ in the way that so many did in times past. But this verse still has application to us, and to our labors for Christ. Work to promote

the truth of the Word of God while you can. Let me give you a good example. This is what is said of William Carey, the missionary to India, as he lay a 'dying. "The peculiarly hot weather and rainy season of 1833 reduced him to such extreme weakness that in September last he had a stroke of apoplexy, and for some time his death was daily expected." "But he revived a little." "During the last cold season he could again take a morning and evening ride in his palanquin, and spend much of the day in an easy chair with a book or in cheerful converse." "But, as the hot weather advanced, he sank daily into still greater debility, till he could take no nourishment, and lay helpless and speechless on his couch." "By the labor of over 30 New Testament translations into Indian languages he had woven its triumphant affirmations into the very texture of his soul." "He rested his sin-stained soul - as on the several earlier occasions when he thought he had come to his crossing—on his atoning Redeemer, and testified with thankfulness that there he, as ever, found His peace. His instructions for the lines to be written on his tombstone were that only the two lines of Isaac Watt's beloved hymn would be written on it. "A wretched, poor and helpless worm, on Thy kind arms I fall." He was, however, "Never wretched, poor, nor helpless, in the safety of those arms." Oh remember this, dear suffering saint; God will give you rest when you die. "If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him." "If we suffer (endure), we shall also reign with Him." "If we deny Him, He also will deny us." "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

And finally – If you die as a sufferer for Jesus, your works will follow you.

"Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." Turn over with me to Matthew 5, verse 10. This beatitude of our Lord Jesus is directly linked to the one that we are studying this afternoon. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake." "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." If you die, as a Christian, suffering under the persecuting hands of any kind of people; Heathen Emperors, or those who say that they are Christians, but are not, your reward is very great. Your works will follow you. The effects of all the labors and good works that you have done during your lifetime will be remembered by God and rewarded. The greatest of these rewards is to be near the Lord in His glory; in the Day when He returns and sits on His glorious throne. . Remember what James and John asked the Lord Jesus, in Mark 10, verse 37? "They said to Him, 'Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.'" "But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you ask.'" "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" He was speaking of His sufferings and His death. "They said, 'We are able.'" "So Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink the cup that I

drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.”

You see; when Christ comes back again, He will have the glorious ability to be able to bring up everything that you have done for His name’s sake. All the works that you have done which were done for self, or done in sin will not last, and they will be burned up in the refining fire of His examination. But those works that have been done for the furtherance of His kingdom of righteousness and the furtherance of His gospel and truth; these shall receive a reward. Hebrews Chapter 6, verse 10. “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” Even a cup of cold water given to another disciple in Jesus’ name shall be remembered. “According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it.” “But let each one take heed how he builds on it.” “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ.” “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.” “If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.” Let us so live, that when it comes our time to die, we can cheerfully look forward to it; and that our works following us will be commendable.