

GNITN

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Tears in Heaven: Why We Must Speak Now

An Embarrassing Incident

Calling one of my experiences in high school an incident might be a tad much, but I certainly remember it as if it was today. You see, when I was a junior in high school all students had to have a class called sex ed. I don't know if they have that now but you couldn't graduate without passing that class. The teacher was a physical education teacher and at that time the classes were segregated with the boys in one class and the girls in another. In any event all the boys took the class together. I'm not going to go into the intimate details, but suffice it to say it was meant to make sure that all of us had the "talk" before we got into the real world after leaving school. I say all that to say that to get a grade we had to pass the test of all the information being disseminated. I was fairly intelligent and learning wasn't a problem for me overall so I got all the answers right. To avoid embarrassment we were all assigned a number and the results were given publicly using them. I was number 32 but everyone knew it was done alphabetically so after we were leaving a few of the guys congratulated me on acing the test. The unwritten rule was to pass but not pass with a 100 as I did. You were supposed to know the basics about the birds and the bees but knowing all the answers meant you learned from experience if you get my drift. In any case, I was blushing after being identified as the only one who aced the test.

Having The Talk

Before you think this segue is about your father or mother telling you where babies come from, it isn't. It is more important than that talk, much more important. You see, our time on this earth is short compared to eternity. In the book of *James* we read just how short it is:

...For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

(James 4:14, NKJV)

Compared to eternity our life is extremely fleeting, short, and transitory. More people have lived and died that are forgotten in the sands of time. Not only do we live a tiny existence, we do so in mostly obscure ways. The man who shines shoes comes and goes without being given more than a tip for his services. Nor does the woman who cleans the laundry for a hotel get the big headlines for what she does. They do have influence, but in the big scheme of earthly existence they hardly matter. No plaques were hung for their achievements, no banquets were planned for their toils, no awards given to them for all they did day in and day out. Literally billions of people lived out their lives without nary a thought for them when they passed away. Some even feel that their lives were meaningless. But God doesn't see things like that. Every soul created has intrinsic value to Him so much that He knows every hair on our heads:

*"What is the price of five sparrows? A couple of pennies? Not much more than that. Yet God does not forget a single one of them. ⁷ And he knows the number of hairs on your head! Never fear, you are far more valuable to him than a whole flock of sparrows. **(Luke 12:6-7, TLB)***

Which brings us to another vital point.

Eternity Is Very Long

On the other end of the spectrum is how long we exist after we die which is where we get the concept of eternity. Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary defines it this way:

1. (n.) *Infinite duration, without beginning in the past or end in the future; also, duration without end in the future; endless time.*
2. (n.) *Condition which begins at death; immortality.*

While some think we cease to exist after we shuffle off this mortal coil, many more understand that there is life after death even if they differ on just what it is. To the reincarnationist it is life after life until we get it right. To some it is all good since a God of love would never send anyone to eternal damnation. The righteous are with God and the unrighteous are annihilated. But for those who believe in the Bible, eternity or an existence without the constraints of time is a very real thing and will be spent in one of two places, Heaven or Hell with the former being lovely and the latter being loathsome. As my pastor growing up was fond of telling us, there is a Hell to shun and Heaven to gain. A famous story of Jesus is a primary source for the choices we face once our bodies die and it's found in ***Luke 16:19-31***. In it Jesus talked about a poor servant named Lazurus and an unnamed Rich Man. Both lived different lives on earth, but their fortunes reversed in eternity:

"There was a certain rich man," Jesus said, "who was splendidly clothed and lived each day in mirth and luxury. 20 One day Lazarus, a diseased beggar, was laid at his door. 21 As he lay there longing for scraps from the rich man's table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores. 22 Finally the beggar died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham in the place of the righteous dead. The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and his soul went into hell. There, in torment, he saw Lazarus in the far distance with Abraham. ([Luke 16:19-23, TLB](#))

Unlike the parables Jesus taught which were illustrations and not about real events, this one actually happened. And it should make everyone pause to assess how they live their lives.

Which Brings Up Another Point

Since we've been given free will by God to live as we wish, it's up to us to make decisions that will decide where we will live in eternity. Like Lazurus and the Rich Man they are spending that eternity in vastly different places based on how they lived on earth. The oft quoted famous verse in the Bible tells us how we offered eternal life:

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son^[a] so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ([John 3:16, TLB](#))

When we accept that gift of eternal life provide for us by Jesus the results are that they won't perish or die and spend eternity like the Rich Man did. And it is by grace that we have the option to avoid eternal damnation. I might add that after we die our eternal existence is etched in stone, there is no turning back, no offer of changing our minds and getting a do over. All of this should be very sobering to us and encourage us to live differently, but sadly like those before the Flood the message of salvation is ignored until it is too late. But there is a sad moment for even those who do make it to Heaven as we see in ***Revelation 21:4***:

He will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain. All of that has gone forever." (TLB)

While there is some debate on why we will be shedding tears, I believe one reason is realizing that loved ones we knew on earth won't be joining us in Heaven. And we know they could have been there if only we took the time to tell them how to avoid Hell.

They Need To Have The Talk

So if you thought my initial story was insignificant, I really had a point in using it. People need to hear about Jesus and His death on the cross which took away the judgment for our sins. Let's go back to **John 3:16** and break it down:

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son^[a] so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ([John 3:16, TLB](#))

God loved you and I so much that He gave Jesus to die for our sins. And in doing so He gives those who believe eternal life. It is that believing part that needs to be explained to everyone so they can decide to accept this most generous offer. And Jesus told us that we need to be telling everyone about this Good News as often as we can:

He told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and earth. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples in all the nations,^[a] baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you; and be sure of this—that I am with you always, even to the end of the world." ([Matt 28:18-20, TLB](#))

Yes, it's true that the ultimate decision is up to every individual to make, but we need to make sure they know about that decision and the seriousness of accepting or rejecting salvation. Going back to the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Rich Man begged Abraham to warn his loved ones to avoid Hell:

"Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹ Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' " ([Luke 16:27-31, NKJV](#))

You see, we are Moses and the prophets in this story now. People need to have that eternal talk. Let's be about our Father's business and tell them. And let's do it today.