

“THE BLESSED DEAD”

Revelation 14:13

“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’”

This has been called The Tenth Beatitude. We are familiar with the 9 Beatitudes that Jesus pronounced in the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 5:2-12:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit”;
“Blessed are they that mourn”;
“Blessed are the meek”;
“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteous”;
“Blessed are the merciful”;
“Blessed are the pure in heart”;
“Blessed are the peacemakers”;
“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake”;
“Blessed are the reviled.”

These are Beatitudes for the living. They are wonderful words indeed. However, the “blessed” pronounced by Jesus in Revelation 14:13 is a Beatitude for those who have died in Christ.

I have intentionally lifted this verse out of its context in order to share these encouraging words with Christians who have seen loved ones and friends precede them in death. These words not only contain comfort in the hour of grief but they communicate a challenge for all of us.

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” The word “blessed” means “happy” – *“Happy are those who die in the Lord.”* Those words mean, among other things, that:

- There is life after death!
- We will meet our Savior!
- There are blessings awaiting us!
- There is a joyous future for those who are children of God!

Let us examine some of the reasons for this blessedness of the Christian dead. First, this state of blessedness is because of:

I. THE REFUGE OF THE DEAD. *“In the Lord”*

We are either “in Christ” or “outside” and apart from Christ. The Apostle Paul refers to the believing sinner’s new address in II Corinthians 5:17 when he says, “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Our new address as born again ones is “in Christ,” that is our spiritual address. We have:

- A new position: *"In Christ"*;
- we are new persons: *"a new creation"*;
- we have a new perspective: *"old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."*

We enter into Christ when we believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ and receive Him as our Savior. He said, *"I am The door, by me if anyone enters in he shall be saved."* (John 10:9)

The following is an old hymn but it is my testimony as it was of the writer, Charles Wesley:

*"Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on thee:
Leave, ah, leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me."
All my trust on thee is stayed,
All my help from thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of thy wing."*

If you have postponed sheltering your soul in Jesus Christ, I urge you today to flee to the Rock of Ages, the Lord Jesus Christ. He died to pay for your sin, he arose again to save and shelter you for eternity! Yes, *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."* To be "in the Lord" is blessed here and hereafter!

Not only do we see the Refuge of the Dead in Revelation 14:13, but think also of the blessedness of:

II. THE REST FOR THE DEAD. *"They rest from their labors."*

This secondary meaning of this statement has reference to the labor which is the common lot of all. *"Six days you shall labor and do all your work."* (Exodus 20:9) The Christian dead have ceased from their labor on earth in order to provide for their livelihood and that of their families. Rest from toil is sweet for the worker, the weary and the way-worn.

However, the primary reference to rest in Jesus' statement is to the rest of the Christian who has labored faithfully in the Lord's vineyard. In Matthew 21 Jesus told a parable about a man who had a vineyard and he said to his son, *"Son, go, work today in my vineyard."* (v.28) God has a vineyard and we are workers in it. We are to:

- labor faithfully as good stewards;
- labor obediently as good servants;
- labor courageously as good soldiers.

As Augustine said, *"We are immortal until our work on earth is done."* Then someday, it will be said of us as it was said of King David in Acts 13:36 *"For David, after he had*

served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep....” The trusting one who is “in Christ” has the promise of an eternity of rest awaiting us after the “heat and the toil of the day.”

However, sadly, the wicked face an eternity of restlessness for, “They have no rest day or night”. (Rev. 14:11) The arms of Jesus are open to receive those who respond to His invitation to “Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

A final look at our text says, “*and their works do follow them.*” Just a few remarks about the blessedness of:

III. THE REWARDS OF THE DEAD. “*And their works follow them*”

What is meant by, “*their works follow them*”? The record of our works follows us and the Lord rewards for faithful labor. Jesus said, “*Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.*” (Rev. 22:12)

- Our works follow us here on earth.
Paul tells Titus to “Be careful to maintain good works.” (Titus 3:8) And Jesus said “let your light shine so that others may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16) We are known by our labors for the Lord while here on earth.
- Our works follow us hereafter – to heaven.
The Christian is not in heaven because his works are there! His works are in heaven because he is!

The architect designs and builds and then dies and leaves his work;
The artist paints, then dies and leaves his work;
The sculptor carves his masterpiece and dies and leaves his work;

However, the Christian worker who builds or paints or sculptures other lives by living and communicating the truth as it is in Christ Jesus has the promise, “*their works do follow them.*”

- Our works will be rewarded by God.
“*And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.*” (Rev. 22:12) We do not serve a stingy God. He is gracious and rewards generously His faithful laborers.

Truly, “*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.*” There is the blessed refuge in our Savior; there is blessed rest in the Father’s house; there are blessed rewards for faithful service. Therefore, let us live so that we too shall hear our Savior say, “*Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of the Lord.*” (Matt. 25:21)