

DYING TESTIMONIES.

Some have inquired if we know of any of the saints now dying in hope of an immediate awakening in our Lord's likeness.

In reply we would say yes, though it has not been our habit to make any special point of such cases, for the reason that too much stress is generally laid upon a dying testimony. It should be remembered that though the instant of death is *now* the instant of change to those accounted worthy of the first resurrection, the change is not to be realized until that instant, and consequently, no testimony of the fact could be given. The dying testimony of the saints, therefore, can be nothing beyond their life testimony – a testimony of their full assurance of faith in the sure promises of God, based upon his approval or disapproval of their walk since the time of their consecration.

In proportion as the covenant of consecration has been scrupulously kept, may the final assurance of acceptance be strong. And as in Paul's case, it may amount to positive assurance, because of positive and continuous faithfulness. He declared "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will give me at that day; and not to me only but unto all them also who love his appearing." But had Paul given no such expression of his latest confidence that he had run successfully, his faithful course was a sufficient proof of it. This testimony of Paul however was not a dying testimony, but the expression of his confidence in view of the fact that he was *about to be offered*.

We have no account in Scripture of any visions of any of the saints when dying. What is generally regarded as a dying vision of Stephen (Acts 7:55,56,) was not a dying vision; for it was because of his statement, that he saw the heavens opened etc., that they ran upon him with one accord and cast him out of the city, and stoned him to death.

And there is nothing in this expression of Stephen, which leads us to believe that he saw this vision otherwise than by the eye of faith – "being full of faith and the holy Spirit."

Consider the few accounts of the death of saints mentioned in the Scriptures – Jesus, Paul, Stephen, also the Prophets. None gave any dying message concerning that which is beyond. No favor of this kind is granted in dying. The dying words of our Lord – My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? – if uttered by any of the saints now, would awaken doubts and fears for their future well-being, because of the general belief in ecstatic visions granted to the faithful in dying. But the fact is, all the saints who share in the sufferings of the sin-bearer must do so unto the very end, and like him must be left to die as parts of the sin-sacrifice. It is only when this sacrifice is accomplished, when the dissolution is complete, that the blessedness of the dead can be realized. In this blessed time of his *presence* it shall be instantly realized by this faithful class – "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

How then shall we regard the dying words of some of our friends who thought they were going to heaven at once, and that, before this specially favored time ("from henceforth")? We must regard their mistaken dying expressions in precisely the same way that we regard their erroneous views previous to their dying hours, remembering that those errors influenced them to the end. The fact that the powers of mind and body are failing and almost exhausted, is certainly no reasonable guarantee that in that hour they possess any increased knowledge, or that they are granted any supernatural insight into the future. Such things are nowhere promised in the Scriptures, and are nowhere recorded in the Scriptures of the dying saints, nor even of the Lord. God does not communicate with the living through the saints either after their death, or in their dying. His method of communicating his truth to them is through his Word; and those who would follow his leading must walk by faith in that Word, down to the very end of the dark valley of death.

Methodists place great stress upon the dying words of one of their bishops – "I am sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem, washed in the blood of the Lamb." This, we can only regard as the outgrowth of his erroneous theology. The New Jerusalem was not yet in existence, but in due time he will be awakened when it will be gloriously established. Other Christians of the various denominations have similar ideas, and often base their hopes on similar errors, while passing by the sure and only foundation of hope given in the Scriptures. The truth gives a confidence in God which cannot be shaken, and which is an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast, even amid the surges of Jordan.

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