

## Encouragement

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Good Morning Friend,

Just days ago Otis Skillings and I were on a ministry trip in Canada. While there we visited a ministry friend who was spending full time at the bedside of her dying mother in a hospital. As soon as we arrived, Donna greeted us with these words . . . *Thank you for stopping by. During the last few weeks, we've known that Mom's condition is terminal. But we've just been told that she could go at any time. Thank you for coming at just the right moment . . . to help us usher Mother into heaven.*

We talked and prayed together. Otis led us in singing . . .

*When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be. When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory.*

We also sang these words . . .

*Soon and very soon we are going to see the King . . . followed by these stanzas:  
No more dying there . . . and . . . No more crying there. We are going to see the King.*

There was sorrow but it was beautifully mixed with joy. It reminded me of what Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica . . . *Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope . . .* as mentioned in I Thessalonians 4:13. We Christians suffer pain, sorrow and loss when a loved one is taken from us but it is different from the finality of the sorrow experienced by unbelievers. The difference is **HOPE**.

Let's look at what the Bible says about this hope.

- Hope comes from the Lord, Who is called *the God of Hope* in Romans 15:13. That is one of His Names.
- Hope is given specifically to us believers who have the Living God abiding within us. Paul states that the secret is this . . . *Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27).
- We have hope, in striking contrast to unbelievers, described in Ephesians 2:12 as people . . . *without hope and without God.*
- When the seed of hope is planted in our hearts, it has the potential to grow greatly as described in Romans 15:13 . . . **overflowing with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**
- We carry this hope with us, knowing that the full realization of this hope is secured and . . . *stored up in heaven for us* (Colossians 1:5).

- Our hope is more than wishful thinking . . . more than a feeble hoping so. Rather it is a certainty . . . *a knowing so.*
- Our hope is focused on Jesus Christ and in His second coming. Paul, in Titus 2:13 says . . . *We wait for the blessed hope-the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*
- Often the Scriptures speak of hope inter-mingled with joy as stated in Romans 12:12 . . . *Be joyful in hope.*

That's what I sensed in that hospital room. Sorrow? Sure! But it was mingled with joy and hope. Again I thanked God for the difference that He makes, both in life and in death. After these special moments, we left for our flight back to Chicago. As soon as we arrived home, we received an e-mail that Donna's mom went to be with the Lord two hours after we left her hospital room.

The Bible doesn't say a lot about the immediate state of the believer after death. But this much we know, he goes into the presence of God. Jesus promised that to the believing thief at the cross . . . *Today, you will be **with me** in paradise.* Paul also teaches the same truth . . . *to be absent from the body is to be at home **with the Lord*** (II Corinthians 5:9). So again for believers, the best is yet to come.

Be encouraged,

Lareau Lindquist