

Considering The Outcome

We have no sympathy for those who at every funeral "preach the dead right on into heaven," who ignore the obvious failure on the part of the deceased to serve the Lord, who try to think that all will somehow get to heaven in spite of their disobedience. There is a hell, and the many of this earth (in contrast to the few) are going there (Matthew 7:13-14).

But we must not allow one extreme to beget another. While the majority will be lost, there are those in this world whose single purpose in life is to serve the Lord and go to heaven when they die; who devote themselves daily to studying God's word and living by its precepts. When such people die, it is right to speak of their good life and faithfulness to the Lord; it is right to commend their example of faithfulness and perseverance to those who may be discouraged; it is right to speak of their eternal reward.

The Hebrew writer stated it this way: "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7 - NASV). Three things are implied in this verse: (1) There had been men in their midst who had served the Lord faithfully unto death; (2) The Hebrew Christians were to be confident that the outcome of the lives of those men was a happy one; (3) Considering this, they were to imitate their faith.

We, like the Hebrews, have had the good fortune of knowing many who have lived godly lives and have now passed on to their reward. Some were elders; some were preachers; some were Bible class teachers; others were just good, faithful, dependable disciples of the Lord who placed His kingdom first in their lives. We are not speaking of the lukewarm and indifferent. We are not speaking of those who claim to be Christians, but were lacking in the fruits of Christianity. We are speaking of the truly dedicated ones who constantly reflected the character of their Father and their Lord Jesus Christ. Their influence on our lives was tremendous. They were men and women of whom this world was not worthy. And the list grows with each passing year.

Every one of these had to overcome serious obstacles to be faithful to the Lord. The Devil challenged each one of them, but he failed. They gained the victory through Christ. Now they are eternally happy because they persevered. Could we ask any one of them, "Was it worth it," his reply immediately would be, "It was a thousand times worth it!" Not one of them regrets a single moment he spent in the Lord's service.

We thank God for such people. We rejoice in their salvation. We look on their passing not as those "who have no hope." And "considering the result of their conduct," we dedicate ourselves to imitating their faith.

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