

## **A LESSON IN LIVING FROM A WONDERFUL WOMAN**

The mother of a dear friend of mine passed away last week. I met her on several occasions and always came away smiling and uplifted after spending time with her. She had such a sweet, kind nature about her. A wonderful tribute was written by her son last week that included some of his mom's thoughts as she lived out her final days. He shared how his mom was actually anxious in a good way during her final days to get to heaven and find out what it would be like. Her anxiousness about heaven provided her with a true sense of peace knowing she was going to be reunited with her family and live with God there.

One of the things she was curious about was what she would be wearing when she got there. Her ability to focus on heaven and eternity allowed her to face her passing with grace, dignity, calmness, and also with a healthy dose of humour. In fact, she wanted her cause of death to be listed as "too many birthdays". She had seen this reading somebody else's obituary one time.

She was quite intrigued during the course of her life by reading obituaries. I remember one time after I began my ministry in Petrolia, she was worried when she saw my name listed in an obituary in The London Free Press and thought I was the deceased. It took her reading it again to realize the reason my name was in the obituary was because I was officiating the funeral.

Her ability to be able to live out her remaining days with such dignity, comfort, and grace had to do with her faith. Her son wrote how his mom was devoted to her church and God. It was her faith and love for God that allowed her to live each day embracing the values of kindness, honesty, forgiveness, generosity and love. I was saddened to learn of this wonderful woman's passing and the grief and loss it would be for my dear friends and the rest of her family. I was also inspired by how she lived out her faith in her final days focusing on eternity which helped her to be comfortable and have a non-anxious presence.

After I read the obituary my friend wrote about his mother, I got thinking that we should be following her example by focusing on eternity when we face challenges in life. It is not only having "too many birthdays" that can cause challenges for us in our lives. Health issues, financial difficulties, dysfunction

within our relationships, problems at work, and so many other things occur at times creating challenges. When these challenges happen, they can take away our sense of peace and comfort. Emotions such as anxiety, worry, and fear can begin to take over as we try to navigate through these challenges. I think we are making things even harder for ourselves in these challenging times by not following this woman's example of focusing on heaven in the midst of the struggle.

Usually, we only start viewing heaven and eternity when we have had too many birthdays. What if we start doing this on a daily basis regardless of the number of candles we blew out on the cake at our last birthday? Would we have this same level of comfort and peace facing these stressful challenges as this woman did in her final days? I think we would. The apostle Paul suggests this in this portion of the second letter he wrote to his dear friend Timothy:

**This is a trustworthy saying:**

**If we die with him, we will also live with him.**

**If we endure hardship, we will reign with him.**

**If we deny him, he will deny us.**

**If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is (2 Timothy 2:11-13).**

These words are believed to have been put into an early Christian hymn. Paul is reminding Timothy here that although we may endure great hardships, it is important for us to remember in the midst of them, that one day we will live eternally with Jesus. This truth comforted Paul as he went through various hardships in his life. Paul was able to endure through these hardships with comfort and grace by assuring himself one day he would be with Jesus in heaven, and that for now His Savior was faithfully helping him through his current ordeal. We learn from both Paul and the example provided by the mother of my dear friend as she lived out her final days, that by keeping our focus on heaven and eternity whenever we go through stressful challenges in life, we will make a real difference in our level of comfort and peace.

Over 2,000 years have passed between the time Paul wrote about this truth and my friend's mother's passing last week. **What has not changed during all these years is the truth that if we focus on eternity and Christ's faithfulness in the midst of challenges we can endure through it with grace, comfort, and peace.**

My friend's mother reminded me of this important truth in how she lived out her final days and by so doing provided a lesson to all of us about this special way to face life's challenges – a wonderful lesson provided to us from a faithful and wonderful lady. I feel truly blessed and inspired by her.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean