

"THE GLORIOUS DAWN"

Mar. 17, '87

SCRIPTURE READING

Deuteronomy 4:29-31

Revelation 22:1-5

Psalm 27: 13-14

Revelation 14:13

SOMEONE SAID AT THE TIME OF BEREAVEMENT, "I FEEL THAT IF I CAN BELIEVE IN GOD, I SHALL HAVE ALL I NEED." TO BE SURE, FAITH IN GOD IS THE SUBLIMEST AND MOST COMFORTING FACT IN THE WORLD. HUMAN EXPLANATIONS AND WORDS ARE OFTEN EMPTY AND FRUSTRATING AT SUCH AN HOUR, BUT THERE IS ONE WHO IS EVER-LASTING TO EVERLASTING, THE CREATOR OF LIFE, THE PLANNER OF DEATH, THE PROVIDER OF ETERNAL HABITATION. AT NO TIME DOES ONE FEEL MORE HELPLESS THAN AT DEATH. HENCE AMOS URGES US TO "SEEK HIM THAT MAKETH THE SEVEN STARS AND ORION, AND TURNETH THE SHADOW OF DEATH INTO THE MORNING...THE LORD IS HIS NAME" GOD ALONE CAN COMFORT YOU. WHY IS THIS SO?

FIRST, BECAUSE HE TURNS THE SHADOWS OF SUFFERING INTO THE GLORIOUS MORNING OF REST. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN PAINFULLY SICK IN THE DARKNESS OF NIGHT - YOU COULD GET NO COMFORT, FIND NO RELIEF? THINGS ALWAYS LOOK WORSE AND MORE FRIGHTENING AT NIGHT. THEN, THE GENTLE RAYS OF MORNING BRIGHTENED THE SKY, MEDICAL ASSISTANCE WAS AVAILABLE AND YOU WERE ABLE THEN TO REST COMFORTABLY. WHAT A GLORIOUS DAWN!

AFTER ONE HAS GONE THROUGH THE WEARINESS OF THE FLESH, AND THE SUFFERING OF A LINGERING ILLNESS, HOW WONDERFUL IT IS THAT "HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP". GOD HAS BROUGHT DEATH A REST FROM THE AGONY OF A BROKEN BODY AND RELEASE FROM THE HAMPERING LIMITATIONS OF THIS WORLD, FOR IN HEBREWS 4:9 ONE READS, "SO THEN, THERE REMAINS A SABBATH REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD, AND IN REVELATIONS 14:13 "BLESSED ARE THE DEAD, WHO DIE IN THE LORD HENCEFORTH...THAT THEY MAY REST FROM THEIR LABORS, AND IN II CORINTHIANS 5:8 "TO BE ABSENT FORM THE BODY IS TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD." ROMANS 8:18"...THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY WHICH SHALL BE REVEALED IN US."

GOD CAN COMFORT YOU ALSO, BECAUSE HE TURNS THE SHADOW OF DEATH INTO THE GLORIOUS MORNING OF LIFE. IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES PEOPLE GROPE FOR LIFE AFTER DEATH, BUT WERE NEVER CERTAIN OF IT. HOWEVER, THE GLORIOUS NEWS OF THE GOSPEL IS THAT DEATH IS NOT THE END. WE LIVE ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF ONE TREMENDOUS HISTORICAL TESTIMONY, THE FACT THAT JESUS CHRIST, WHO THOUGH HE DIED, YET LIVED TO BE SEEN BY HUNDREDS OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE ON MANY DIFFERENT OCCASIONS. "BECAUSE I LIVE," HE

SAID, "YOU SHALL LIVE ALSO..." "JESUS CHRIST HAS ABOLISHED DEATH, AND BROUGHT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIFE..." "I AM THE RESURRECTION, AND THE LIFE: HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD, YET SHALL HE LIVE."

IN ANCIENT TIMES, MOURNERS BURIED LOVED ONES FACING THE WEST, TOWARD THE SUNSET, THE DARKNESS, THE NIGHT. BUT AFTER CHRIST AROSE FROM THE DEAD, CHRISTIANS BURY LOVED ONES FACING THE EAST, TOWARD THE SUNRISE, THE LIGHT, THE DAWN OF THE DAY.

GOD COMFORTS YOU ALSO BY TURNING THE SHADOWS OF DISAPPOINTED HOPES INTO THE MORNING OF REWARDS. THIS EARTHLY LIFE IS FILLED WITH DISAPPOINTMENTS, HEARTACHES, FRUSTRATIONS, UNFULFILLED DREAMS. DEATH IS THE GATEWAY TO A WORLD OF REWARDS. MORE VALUABLE THAN ALL THE FAME, MONEY, RECOGNITION, JOY AND FRIENDSHIP WHICH THIS WORLD CAN EVER GIVE. "EYE HATH NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NEITHER HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN, THE THINGS WHICH GOD HATH PREPARED FOR THEM THAT LOVE HIM. OFTEN OUR WORK FOR THE LORD ON EARTH IS SEEMINGLY UNNOTICED, UNAPPRECIATED, AND VAIN. IT IS NOT SO: INSTEAD THE PROMISE OF OUR LORD IS, "IF ANY MAN'S WORK ABIDE...HE SHALL RECEIVE A REWARD." "GOD IS NOT UNRIGHTEOUS TO FORGET YOUR WORK AND LABOUR OF LOVE" "BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD...THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM.

MARSHAL FOCH, THE FRENCH GENERAL IN WORLD WAR I, SAID TO THE MINISTER ATTENDING HIM AT DEATH, "I HAVE HAD MY SPAN OF LIFE. ALL I WANT NOW IS HEAVEN."

THE PRAYER OF ONE AGED BELIEVER WAS, "LORD, NOW LETTEST THOU THY SERVANT DEPART IN PEACE, ACCORDING TO THY WORD: FOR MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THY SALVATION". GOD ALONE CAN TURN THE SHADOWS OF YOUR NIGHT INTO SUNRISE TOMORROW.

PRAYER

O GOD, WHO ART FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING: THOUGH OUR HEARTS ARE FULL, WE LOOK THROUGH THE SHADOWS AND CLOUDS HOVERING ABOUT US TO SEE THY LIGHT OF LOVE AND MERCY AND HOPE. OUR TRUST IS IN THEE, WE THANK THEE FOR THE PROMISE THAT IN THE SEVERING OF THIS PHYSICAL TIE, THE SPIRIT HAS BEEN RELEASED FROM THE PAIN AND INFIRMITIES OF A WEAKENED BODY, AND THAT WHICH HAS BROUGHT US BEREAVEMENT HAS MEANT PEACE AND LIFE AND VICTORY TO THE DEPARTED. WE THANK THEE FOR THE ASSURANCE OF THAT ABODE WHERE PAIN SHALL BE NO MORE, AND TEARS SHALL BE WIPED FROM THEIR EYES, AND DEATH WILL BE UNKNOWN. OR LORD, HOW WONDERFUL IT MUST BE "THAT EYE HATH

NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOT HAS IT ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN WHAT THOU HAST PROMISED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THEE" AND INTO WHICH INHERITANCE OUR DEPARTED HAS ALREADY ENTERED.

WE THANK THEE FOR HIS LIFE RICH IN FAITH AND GOOD WORKS, ESTEEMED BY HIS FAMILY, FRIENDS, COMMUNITY AND CHURCH. WE HOLD IN TENDER MEMORY HIS STEADY FORBEARANCE, QUIET PATIENCE IN SUFFERING. SUSTAIN AND COMFORT HIS FAMILY WITH THE CONSOLATION THAT IN THY HOLY KEEPING ARE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD AND ALL ARE SAFE UNTIL THOU SHALL REUNITE US IN AN EVERLASTING LOVE. IN LONELINESS, STEADY HIS COMPANION OF MANY YEARS. GIVE US STRENGTH TO RETURN TO OUR DUTIES UNTIL THE SUMMONS COMES WHEN WE SHALL SAY, "FATHER, I HAVE FINISHED THE WORK WHICH THOU GAVEST ME TO DO" AND HE SHALL SAY, "WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT. ENTER INTO THY JOY. AMEN.