

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Blessing the Dead

Scripture: Revelation 14:12–13

Code: 80-423

For this morning as we think about the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and our own hope of eternal life, I want you to open your Bible to the 14th chapter of Revelation, the book of Revelation, the Apocalypse, the unveiling of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in the book of revelation, I want you to look at the 14th chapter, and I'll begin reading in verse 9, and I want to read down a ways from verse 9 to the end of the chapter.

Revelation 14:9, "Then another angel, a third one followed them saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast - ' that's the Antichrist ' – and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he will also drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger, and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. They have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name. Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the Commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.'

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.'

"Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son a man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come because this harvest of the earth is ripe.' Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

"And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven; he also had a sharp sickle. Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle saying, 'Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth because her grapes are ripe.' So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press up

to the horses' bridles for a distance of two hundred miles.”

This terrifying portion of Scripture describes the time when our Lord Jesus returns to bring to an end the period known as the great tribulation, to judge the wicked all over the earth, and to establish His glorious earthly kingdom. The judgments in this chapter are only a small portion of the judgments that are described in the book of Revelation. They start in chapter 6 and they run all the way to chapter 19, judgment, after judgment, after judgment, after judgment.

Much of that judgment, of course, focuses on that seven-year period called the great tribulation, that period in which hell belches forth bound demons who are loosed on the earth to accompany those demons that already occupy their kingdom in our midst. At the same time that hell releases demons, Satan activates them in a way that has never been done before. The restraint that God has on Satan is released, is removed, and all hell breaks loose on earth. Satan lifts up the worst ruler the world has ever known, the Antichrist, and his associate, the False Prophet. They wreak havoc on the earth and massacre believers wherever they are found.

At the same time that Satan is doing his worst damage in human history, God is also doing His most fierce judgment in human history. It is a horrendous, horrendous time. Jesus said there's never been a time like it, Matthew 24. He said, “There has never in the history of the world been a time like this time will be, for horrors, and death, and persecution, and judgment.” In fact, if it isn't shortened by God Himself, nobody would be able to survive.

God unleashes judgments during this period of time that affect the earth. A fourth of the population of the world dies. A third of the population of the world then dies. Celestial bodies careen and crash into the earth. Salt water is destroyed in the sense that the oceans are polluted. Fresh water is destroyed in the sense that lakes and rivers are polluted. It is the worst of all times in human history. It is the accumulation of all the worst of times in a very brief, intense period. And at the heart of all of this, Satan is making his last fling, and God is unleashing His fury.

In the middle of this hurricane of judgment there's an eye in the storm, there's a calm, and it's in verses 12 and 13. And that's what I want you to focus on: “Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.’”

I want you to look at that statement, “Blessed are the dead.” Blessed are the dead. That seems such a strange statement. We could understand, “Blessed are the living.” And if we think about, “Blessed are the dead,” we might say the only people who would say that would be terrorists who for some strange, bizarre reason, having been deceived by Satan and false religion, think that they will be blessed if they kill themselves with other people.

Terrorists believe there’s a blessing in death; and they, of course, are eternally deceived. There are those, perhaps, who advocate euthanasia and the elimination of the terminally ill who would see death as some kind of a blessing. And then there are those sweeping idealists who want to kill people in massive ways in order to create a utopia. We saw that in the 20th century in Europe when 100 million people were murdered to create a socialist utopia, which never came.

But for most people, apart from terrorists and people who are into euthanasia, and people who have some bizarre idea of utopia and the elimination of people who stand in the way, death is not a blessing. Death is just the opposite of a blessing. Everybody wants to avoid death; it is a curse. But here we read, “Blessed are the dead.”

What does blessed mean? *Makarios*. It means happy, blissful, serene, fulfilled, content are the dead. What this tells us is that there is life after death. It’s not nothing; it’s blessedness, it’s satisfaction, it’s fulfillment. It’s reality that is fully content and serene. The death that is a blessing is, “The death of those - ” it says in verse 13 “ – who die in the Lord,” who die in the Lord. This is what our Lord has provided for us through His resurrection. “Because I live, you shall live also.” He rose to eternal life to give us eternal life. He is the first fruits and we follow.

In this text, this promise of blessing and death is very, very critical because the ones to whom it is given, the saints referred to here, are the very saints in that future time of tribulation. They’re in the middle of the worst persecution the believing community has ever known in human history. They are in the worst time in the history of the world. They are in the holocaust that is the mother of all holocausts and the summation of all holocausts. They are in a time when everything is being crushed under the power of Satan or the judgment power of God. They are in the greatest time of slaughter the world has ever known. They are in the greatest time of martyrdom that believers have ever suffered.

It is a strange place for a beatitude. It is a strange place for a beatitude. But it is so important to have the comfort of a beatitude, a blessed reality. In fact, there are seven beatitudes scattered throughout

the book of Revelations. Seven times there is a stopping point in the midst of the horror, and the word comes from heaven, "Blessed are; blessed are; blessed are."

There are many beatitudes in Scripture, many blessings in Scripture with which we are familiar. Psalm 1, "Blessed is the man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of scoffers or scorners." Or Psalm 2, "Blessed are all who take refuge in Him," meaning the Son of God. Or Psalm 32, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity," reported again in Romans 4. Or you might look at Psalm 34, "Blessed is the man who takes refuge in the Lord." Or Psalm 40, "Blessed is the man who has made the Lord His trust." Or 41, "Blessed is he who considers the helpless. The Lord will deliver him in the day of trouble."

Or Psalm 65, "Blessed is the one who chooses to draw near to your courts," worship. Or Psalm 84, "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house. They are always praising You." Or again in Psalm 84, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in You." Or Psalm 106, "Blessed are those who keep justice, practice righteousness at all times." Or Psalm 112, "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord and who greatly delights in His commandments."

There are so many of these wonderful blessings, beatitudes. Psalm 119, verse 2, "Blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart." Or Proverbs 8, "Blessed is the man who listens to Me." Or again in Proverbs 8, "Blessed is the man who keeps My ways."

And then there is that wonderful text in Matthew 5 where Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with a series of blessings: "Blessed are the poor in the spirit. Blessed are those that mourn. Blessed are the humble or meek. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst. Blessed are those who are merciful. Blessed are those who are pure. Blessed are those who are peacemakers. Blessed are those who are persecuted." In James, there's a wonderful benediction, a wonderful beatitude: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation."

And as I said, there are seven in the book of Revelation, seven more blessings. But I want us to focus on this one: "Blessed are the dead." Blessed are the dead. Might seem the comment of a cold and indifferent heart, but that's because you don't understand the Christian gospel, and Christian truth, and biblical promise. "Blessed are the dead."

There are two realities that contribute to the blessedness of those who die in the Lord; two realities. Number one, how they live; and number two, how they die. Let's talk about how they live from the text of verse 12.

Look at verse 12: "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus." The death of a believer, the one who dies in the Lord, is blessed in his death because of how he has or she has lived. And here's the point: Believers live with perseverance. Believers live with perseverance.

Just look at that phrase, "Here is the perseverance of the saints." That's a very familiar phrase to theologians because we talk a lot about the perseverance of the saints. Some of you may have assumed that we sort of invented that and it didn't come from the Bible, but it does. It's found here and also in chapter 13, verse 10, "Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints." You can see it just before this text.

The perseverance of the saints is a critical reality. This classic doctrine provides assurance; it provides hope; it provides joy to every true believer. And what does it say? What does it mean? Listen, it is a statement of fact.

Go back to verse 12: "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus." This is not a command; this is not a suggestion; this is not a mandate. This is a statement of fact. This is a statement of fact. True saints persevere. True saints persevere.

And this is said in the context of the time of great tribulation in the future. This classic doctrine is most singularly defined by the horrors of the time in which it is declared. This great doctrinal truth teaches that those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will persevere in faith, even in the worst of times. This is necessary comfort for tribulation saints.

Those who have saving faith will never lose it. It will never disappear; it will never dissipate. They will never stop believing; they will never stop trusting; they will never stop obeying. They will endure no matter what assaults may come from hell, no matter what may happen around them. No matter how severe, how deadly, how far-reaching persecution and martyrdom may come, they will endure to the end. They will persevere in faith. They will sustain themselves in faith.

Some people call this eternal security, but that speaks of it from God's side. Some people say it's once saved, always saved, but that's simply a description. The point that is most urgent to understand is that the reason we are secure eternally, the reason once saved, always saved is because we persevere. We are enabled by divine grace to persevere to the end no matter what comes. These are true statements, "Eternal security. Once saved, always saved." Those are true statements. They, however, do not express the reality of how that happens. It happens because we have been given by God's grace and power, an enduring faith, a faith that perseveres.

The reality is that regenerated people continue in faith to the very end no matter what happens. And when saints are facing the worst that will ever be known in all of human history, the forces of hell being unleashed, the world around them collapsing and being literally obliterated by the hand of God Himself as He crashes heavenly bodies into the earth, as He destroys the water supply, as He destroys the crops all over the earth, as demons run loose everywhere, as martyrs for the faith are slaughtered on every front, and in every means and way possible - even by members of their own families, as all of this hell is unleashed and heaven itself unleashed in judgment - the faith of a true believer will persevere. It will persevere because that is the nature of saving faith. That is a tremendously important promise to the saints of the future as well as to the saints of today.

Regenerated people continue in faith to the very end no matter how difficult it becomes. The character of our faith is enduring. This is perseverance, and it couldn't possibly be more clearly seen or more powerfully seen than in the context of this passage. Here we are face-to-face with saints who belong to the Lord in that future time of tribulation, who live during the worst assaults of Satan in all of human history, and the very judgment of God around them. They survive, and they survive with their faith intact.

As I said, Jesus said in Matthew 24, if He doesn't shorten this, everyone would be destroyed. God will never allow any temptation to overtake you that you will not be able to endure. That's the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13. Here we meet the most tested, potentially terrified believers in all of history with the most powerful assaults of hell's hosts coming against them during the most troubled and wicked time of human history, when the restraining work of the Holy Spirit is removed, Satan's last effort to destroy the work of God, and the true saints persevere to the end.

It's sort of like you think you've got troubles now; you have no idea how strong saving faith really is. This will be for the whole world of believers what Job's tests were for him - horrific. But Job said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," because saving faith perseveres. This brief passage of

encouragement for believers is set in-between what I read you, those dramatically contrasting sections of the horrible damnation of the worshippers of Antichrist. The whole world follows the Antichrist and Satan right into hell, right into the lake of fire. In the midst of this, true saints survive.

A lot of folks who think this is the worst of times in their life – maybe it is – that in our world, it's never been as bad as it is now - maybe so. It's not like this. People say, "I'm afraid for what's going to happen to the church. I'm afraid for what's going to happen to believers." Don't be afraid; they will persevere. They will persevere.

That's the nature of saving faith. Those who truly belong to Christ will remain loyal. They will not fall prey to the lies; they will not fall prey to the deception; they will not be undermined in their faith. Satan cannot touch them anymore than he could touch Job. This is the special benediction and blessing and beatitude placed on all of those who belong to the Lord in the time of Antichrist's reign of terror.

Where did these saints come from? Prior to this time, the church is raptured. But as that tribulation time begins, an amazing explosion of the gospel takes place. The preaching of the two witnesses in chapter 11, the preaching of the 144,000 Jews – 12,000 from every tribe that are saved and evangelize the world – the preaching of an angel in the sky preaching the everlasting gospel, the eternal gospel it talks about back in verse 6 - all of these gospel opportunities will explode on the world of that day and people will be saved, and many will be saved.

Revelation 7, "They'll be saved from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation; and they will be saved in such numbers they can't be counted." The Jews will be saved - 144,000 are mentioned at the beginning of chapter 14. They're mentioned also back in chapter 7. Jerusalem will be converted, as chapter 11 says. Jews and Gentiles will be saved. They will then become the martyrs, crying out for God to bring judgment. But they will persevere.

John talks of this perseverance in a general sense, not with regard to the tribulation saints, but all of us when in 1 John 5:4, he writes, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith." Our faith overcomes the world.

No matter what happens in the world, no matter how much of the power of Satan who runs this world has unleashed, our faith overcomes. "Who is the one - " verse 5 " – who overcomes the world? But he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, you have overcome the world. You have overcome the power of Satan at its worst. This is the great truth of the

perseverance of the saints; they survive. They survive in the end with their faith intact.

Look at Hebrews, chapter 11. This also a wonderful and familiar chapter - Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 13, looking at the saints in the past. We looked at the saints in the future in Revelation 14. Let's look at the saints in the past, going back to the Old Testament.

We have a statement in verse 13, the very first statement, "All these died in faith." What does that mean? They hadn't received the promise. They were living in faith, the faith that hadn't seen the fulfillment of the promise. They hadn't seen the one they trusted, the one they believed in. The Messiah hadn't even come. But they all died in faith.

And how did they die? Go over to verse 32. "What more shall I say? Time would fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Sampson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises; shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword; from weakness were made strong; became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, not accepting their release so that they might obtain a better resurrection.

"Others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned; they were sawn in two; they were tempted; they were put to death with a sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - men of whom the world was not worthy - wandering in deserts, and mountains, and caves, and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, didn't receive what was promised."

There they are; they all died in faith. Their faith survived all of those horrible persecutions. This is the faith of the Old Testament saints that overcame death, that endured torture, that outlasted imprisonment, that conquered changed, that withstood fierce temptation, that underwent martyrdom, that survived every kind of hardship. True faith can't be killed. It couldn't in the Old Testament and it won't be in the future time of tribulation. And it's the same now. True faith is relentless. It endures anything. It endures everything. It is the nature of the faith that God grants that it is everlasting.

You say, "Well, what about people who make a profession of Christ and walk away?" First John 2:19, "They went out from us because they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would have continued with us. They went out from us that it might be manifest they never were of us." Now back to our text.

Here is the perseverance of the saints. These tribulation saints will take all that the Antichrist can give, and they will endure. They will persevere patiently, with sustained, persistent faithfulness under the most relentless and vicious persecution and martyrdom ever known; and, therefore, they will die and enter blessings. Blessed are the dead.

What are the characteristics of their perseverance? Look back at verse 12. They do two things - they keep the commandments of God and they keep their faith in Jesus. They obey and they trust. They keep the commandments of God. That's a characteristic of a true believer. That's what true believers do. Obedience is always the evidence of true, saving faith. Obedience is always the evidence of salvation. An enduring commitment of true Christians to obey the Word of God is the mark of salvation. Not only do they obey, but they trust, they trust. They keep the faith of Jesus. They keep their faith in Him. They're loyal to Christ. Even under the deadly reign of Antichrist, they are loyal to Christ.

The Old Testament saints, even though it cost them their lives, they were looking forward to one who hadn't even yet come. They were living in hope. These believers looking back to one who did come, but they continued to trust in Jesus through it all. That's the nature of saving faith. It is by nature, enduringly obedient and trusting like those in Hebrews, chapter 11; like those in Revelation, chapter 14. True believers continue to obey and continue to believe. Saving faith is forever and obedience is consistent. It doesn't mean we're perfect, but the path of obedience is always the path in which a true believer walks. Saving faith is marked by obedience and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the first wonderful reality of being blessed in death is based upon how we live. For death to be a blessing, you must live trusting in Jesus and obeying the commands of God. And that's what believers do. Believers live life most purely; they live life most nobly; they live life most purposefully. They live life most fully, most richly, most joyously, most happily. They live life in a most exemplary way, most productive way, because they have been transformed to do that.

If there was no heaven, this would still be the best way to live life. But there is heaven. The righteous life in and of itself is the best. But it is the best because there is heaven; and when death comes, death becomes blessed, blessed.

So first of all, death is a blessing to the saints because of how they live. They live the best way. They live in faith and obedience to God, which then produces blessing and supervision from a divine level

for all the issues of their lives.

But we don't want to stop there because the point is death. The second feature of this text comes in verse 13, how we live. We live with perseverance - persevering in our trust, persevering in our obedience. But more importantly and more to the point, how we die. We die with promise. We die with promise. We live with perseverance; we die with promise.

Listen to what verse 13 says: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.' I heard a voice from heaven."

In the book of Revelation, that happens a lot. A lot of times, there's a voice from heaven all through the book of Revelation. Sometimes it's an angel; sometimes it's Christ; sometimes it's God. In fact, in chapter 18 and chapter 21, there are going to be statements coming out of heaven from God's own lips metaphorically speaking.

So who is this speaking here? Who is this? Is this an angel or is this the Lord? Well, it says, "Write; write." Many times in the book of Revelation, John is commanded to write, commanded to write, including seven times he's writing letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. It seems as though it is the divine voice that commands to write.

Back in chapter 1, John says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet saying, 'Write, write.'" And then further down, we are introduced to the living One who was dead and is alive forever more, and has the keys of death and hades; and that's the Lord Christ who says, "Write," verse 19.

This is the voice of Christ. This is the voice of God. This is a divine command, I think, rather than an angel. He's under a divine mandate to write. And, "Write this down - " he is told " - Blessed are the dead. Blessed are the faithful martyrs." We saw them back in chapter 6 under the altar crying out to God to bring judgment on their executors: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Write that down, John."

That message is important for all believers, and it's going to be very important for the believers in the time of tribulation. It's like Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. It reminds us of what we did not read in that wonderful 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, “This perishable will put on imperishable. This mortal will put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin. The power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Blessed are those who die in the Lord. It is a triumph. It is a victory.

From now on, for the rest of history to the very end when Christ returns to finally destroy the wicked and establish his everlasting rule, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. That’s only true if you’re a believer, if you die in the Lord; otherwise, your death is described in verse 10 as, “The result of the wrath of God in full strength, the cup of His anger. And what comes is torment with fire and brimstone - ” verse 11 “ – forever and ever. No rest, day and night. But blessed are those who die in the Lord.” And then an amazing amen comes out of heaven: “Yes,” says the Spirit. That is so interesting. “Yes,” says the Spirit.

Although the Spirit of God is the author of all Scripture - and in chapter 1, John was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day when he received his first vision - the Spirit is given the responsibility of divine revelation to the writers of Scripture. Although that is true that the Spirit is the author, in the book of Revelation, the Spirit only speaks twice. There’s only twice where the Spirit actually says something.

The other one is in chapter 22, verse 17. The Spirit says, “Come.” The Spirit says, “Come.” The Spirit and the bride are the church: “Come.” It’s an invitation to come – come to God; come to salvation; come to glory. When the Spirit does speak, He seems to only speak in one word: “Come.” And here He says, “Yes.” Yes? Why is the Spirit saying that? Why is the Spirit saying yes?

Who was it that convicted you of your sin before you were saved? The Holy Spirit is given to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. Who was it that gave you new life? Who was it that regenerated you? You are born of the Spirit. Who was it who took up residency in you? Who was it who lives in you? The Holy Spirit. Who is it who is your illuminator, who teaches you all things? It is the Holy Spirit.

Who is the one who fills your life and moves you in the direction of obedience? Who is the one who makes the Word of God alive and practical? Who is the one who gifted you? Who is the one who is your strength in every temptation and every trial? Who is the one who comforts you in all your sorrow? Who is the one who strengthens you in all your weakness? The Holy Spirit. And when you finally die, the Holy Spirit will say, “Yes; yes.”

That's His divine amen when He gets you there. It's an amazing affirmation. He's on our side and He is taking us to glory. That's why in Ephesians it says, "We are sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption." It is the Spirit that keeps us, guards us, protects us. And when we finally die as martyrs under the worst circumstances, we enter into the blessedness of the next life, and the Spirit says, "Yes; yes." That's His work, to bring us to glory, to bring us to glory.

Two things happen when we leave this world if we die in the Lord – a negative and a positive. The negative is verse 13: "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors!" That's the negative; no more labor.

Now we have to define labor. What does that mean? It's a word, *kopon*, that is kind of broad. It encompasses ideas like physical weariness; literally to wear one's self out, to make some kind of great effort or great exertion. But it also is the word for "to beat the breast in sadness, sorrow, lament."

So it sort of comes to mean trouble – all the troubles of life, all the things, including a certain kind of fatigue. And I'm not just saying a physical fatigue, but just the fatigue of living in a fallen condition in a fallen, corrupt world. You'll rest from that; no more of that. All the struggle, all the disappointment, all the anxiety, all the fear, all the doubt, all the short-comings, all the unfulfillment, all the dissatisfaction - all gone forever. That's why there are no more tears, no more crying, no more sorrow.

When the Holy Spirit says, "Yes," His amen means no more struggle of any kind; rest from all struggle. It doesn't mean you're not going to do anything. You're not going to sit on a cloud and play a harp forever; not at all.

In fact, back in chapter 7 and verse 15, it says that the ones who are before the throne of God serve Him day and night, serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne spreads His tabernacle over them and they don't hunger any longer, they don't thirst any longer. The sun doesn't beat them any longer; they don't experience heat. The lamb is in the center of the throne. He's their shepherd, guides them to springs of the Water of Life, and God wipes every tear from their eyes.

We just don't sit around; we have no resistance to our service. Nothing goes wrong. Everything is perfect for these dear saints that will one day hear this in the time of tribulation, living in the worst of

times, deep sorrow with the family members and friends being killed, and their own lives being threatened. They will be demanding of themselves the greatest kind of exertion of strength, the greatest kind of exertion of service to their Lord in that time. They're going to be seeking to survive.

They won't be able to buy or sell, they will not be a part of the kingdom of the Antichrist, they'll be hunted to death like wild animals, and their end will be a frenzied end from a human viewpoint. They will be struggling with their own weaknesses. And when death comes – rest, *anapau* - far more than the worn mariner, worried by his long and painful endurance of the tempest, endangers the wild cold sea as he enters the calm port, finds his way home; far more than the mutilated, scarred and sick soldier who's home from the miseries of battle, laying softly on his own bed with people who love him; ten thousand times ten thousand more than that. When we go to glory, this will be a real rest. There will never be another conflict forever. Never, forever, another conflict, another struggle of any kind. The damned never rest, verse 11 says - never, ever, ever rest. Hell is an endless struggle.

There's a positive reason why the Holy Spirit rejoices and says yes: "For their deeds follow with them," for their deeds follow with them - deeds, *erga*, work.

What does that mean? Well, that's your reward. What you won't have in heaven is work in the sense that you'll dissipate energy; or you'll have obstacles, or barriers, or impediments, or restraints, or disappointments. What you will have in heaven is the reward for the work that you did against the grain of all those things in this life. Your works will follow you there.

Hebrews 6:10 puts it this way: "God will not forget your labor." God will not forget your kingdom work. In fact, we will receive a crown of life, which the Lord will give to us. We'll receive a crown of rejoicing, which the Lord will give to us. There are a series of crowns in the New Testament - will be rewarded based on gold, silver, or precious stone, after the wood, hay, and stubble is burned up.

The Lord says at the end of the book of Revelation, "Behold, I come quickly. My reward is with me to give to every man according to his work," shall be when you get to heaven, there will be a reward waiting for you there. That reward, I believe, will enable you to serve the Lord forever. It will be a capacity; some kind of supernatural, eternal, divine capacity to serve the Lord forever.

Blessed are the dead. Death is a blessing when you live with persevering faith and you enter into the perfection of heaven; one whose life was a true life of salvation faith, trusting and obeying the Lord all the way through, never failing; and then whose death was filled with promise. A life of perseverance;

a death full of promise. The promise – rest and reward. This is the best that God can possibly give. This is why Jesus died and rose again. He died to take away the sins of the world. He rose again to provide life. He conquered death for us.

It needs to be said that if you're living life and you are struggling with it, join the human race. If you are unsure about any future, just know this: apart from Christ, your struggle will go on forever, forever. There will be no rest, and there will be no reward; and eternity will be weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth; outer darkness; isolation. It's a frightening thing. Cursed are those who die that way. But blessed, what more can we say? Blessed are those who die in the Lord. They will rest forever and be forever rewarded.

Lord, we thank You that You have graciously given us gospel truth, enabled us to believe; and we thank You that the Holy Spirit has begun a good work in us, which He will continue until the day we die, that someday in the future, the Holy Spirit, upon our death, will say, "Yes; yes; yes. Amen. My work is done; another saint brought to glory."

How grateful we are, Lord, for this mighty, sovereign, supernatural work. I pray for anyone who's with us today who doesn't know Christ as Savior and Lord; who has not repented of sin and embraced the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and put their complete trust and faith in Him as Savior. I pray, Lord, that that would happen today, even now, that they might begin to live with that persevering faith, and the promise of eternal rest and eternal reward. Do that work, Lord, in hearts, even now. We'll thank You and give You praise, in Christ's name. Amen.

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