

Communion Meditation 10/10/10 **Benefits at Death**

Question 37 What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

Answer 37 of the WSC: The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still untied to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.

If you asked an unbelieving friend or relative about the benefits of death, what do you think they would say? They would probably think you are crazy. Many would say there are no benefits.

In the Ray Comfort evangelism training class we heard a number of people say they didn't believe in life after death, or in hell. One guy I remember said "This is hell" and kind of laughed. But he is a very good example of a fool, because hell is a real place and is terrible beyond our comprehension. He made light of it because he is hoping that there is no hell! He may wish for an escape into nothingness, but he has a soul which will continue to exist, and no amount of wishing will change the fact that he will continue to exist, and there is a place of punishment.

2 Thess 1.9 says "These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

Some unbelievers might say that death is escape from the pains of the world, but that is not the case for anyone who does not trust in Jesus.

But as believers in the Lord Jesus, there is great hope, eternal hope. And there are great benefits, incomprehensible in their glory.

First of all, **the souls of believers at their death are made perfect in holiness**. All of us would admit that we are far from this perfection in holiness now, even though the Lord is always graciously working to sanctify us through His word and Spirit.

Heb 12.23 "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the **spirits of just men made perfect**.." our brothers and sisters in Heb 11 who died in the Lord. They have been, and we will be, made perfect in holiness.

And secondly, at death believers immediately pass into glory.

Thomas Vincent, in commenting on Q&A 37 of the catechism, said we are coming into a glorious place, into a glorious company, and into a glorious state.

The glorious place: Jn 14.2, Jesus declared, “I go to prepare a place for you”, and the Lord of all creation is preparing a place for His own children, it is going to be an amazing place - paradise restored.

The glorious company: Heb 12.23 we will join the spirits of just men made perfect

The glorious state: Rev 14.13 “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.” We are coming to a state of rest, and enjoyment of the Lord and of our reward.

Thomas Watson, the Puritan pastor, likened saints to apprentices. He said when apprentices are finished with their time of being basically indentured slaves, they are made free, and that “when saints are out of their time of living, they are made free”.

We are apprentices now, still bound somewhat by sin. But after death we are then free of the power and presence of sin. And this apprenticeship has a purpose! John Piper, in his book Taste and See says that this life is a breath, which the word declares, and that **this life is a vapor’s breath of preparation for eternity. God is preparing us to enjoy Him forever!**

Paul realized the benefits! In **Phil 1.21-23** “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”

In the words of institution of this communion celebration, we say, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”

Every week we proclaim that he died for us, and that we died in Him. And we proclaim that He rose again, and that we rose victorious in Him, rose to new life. And that He is coming again to take us to the place He is preparing.

I’d like to read the last two lines of “In Christ Alone”, which we will be singing after the sermon.

Lord Jesus, thank you for preparing a place for us, an eternal home; for dying and rising again so we might enjoy the great company of your children forever, and for the glorious state and condition in which we will live, in rest and enjoyment of you. Forgive us for fear of death. We want to have an eternal perspective as we prepare for your call and your coming. You are coming again. Hallelujah! Thanks be to God who gives us the victory, the victory over death, through our Lord Jesus Christ.