

## **What Happens When a Baby Dies?**

As a pastor, I sometimes deal with difficult events. One of the more difficult set of circumstances is when a baby or child dies. I find myself grieved and sometimes it takes awhile after prayer to adjust to the news and get back to my work, however as pastor of the most wonderful people in the world, I understand and appreciate the fact that this is my work. Just this week, I have counseled twice on this subject. This morning, since I cannot think of much else, I took this as a sign from the Lord to write a hopefully helpful article on this subject.

What a contrast! Last week I was at the bedside of Colonel Cain who lived a full, rich life before he passed and this week, I am dealing with the passing of children.

### **1. All babies go to directly to Heaven.**

Sometimes I will allow for “wiggle room” in some area of theology; however, on this matter, there is none. I am convinced to the deepest core of my being that our God, who is love and never arbitrary in judgment would ever in a million years consign a little one to Hell. Allow me to explain. The Bible says, *“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”* (James 4:17). A baby or young child is born with the sinful nature because of the fall, but if that child has not come to the age of accountability, in other words, a clear understanding of right and wrong, they will not be held accountable before God for what they did not know. This principle is found throughout the Bible: *“For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not”* (II Corinthians. 8:12). So God will not hold someone responsible who cannot cognitively embrace the simple facts of the Gospel. This is why I believe in three spiritual states: 1) Lost, (this is the person who sins and knows it and refuses to repent). 2) Saved, (this is the person who knows he has sinned but has repented and received Christ). 3) Safe, (this is the person who never came to the knowledge of right and wrong) Babies, young children, and the severely mentally handicapped would be in this category.

The Bible says of the law of God -- the commandments given on Sinai, i.e. the “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not”-- *“For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law”* (Romans 5:13). In theological definition, “impute” is to ascribe to someone by virtue or guilt of a similar quality in another. So when we believe, the righteousness of Christ is imputed. Outside of Christ we are living in a fallen state because of the original sin of Adam, but if we do not have the knowledge of our lost-ness, we are not lost, although we may not be categorized saved. We are safe in calling that person, “safe,” for you see the Bible declares, *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin”* (Romans 3:20). Paul said, *“For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died”* (Romans 7:9). This is a most fascinating proclamation, because Paul is saying there was a time he was spiritually alive, then he

understood the law, in other words, he became accountable to the law he understood. Then he declared, "...and I died." That dovetails with, "*For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me*" (Romans 7:11). Sin cannot take advantage when the weapon of the law is not handed off. King David's baby died within the first week of its life outside its mother's womb. David said, in II Samuel 12:23, "*But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*" We know that David went to Heaven; centuries after he died he was declared, "...a man after mine own heart..." (Acts 13:22). Where was the baby? Only one place for him to be and that would be Heaven as well. The Bible never says anything about limbo or purgatory. There is no in-between state where a soul must be prayed out of to enter heaven. The baby goes directly into the presence of Jesus.

## **2. Babies are escorted by the angels into heaven when they pass.**

God watches over the little ones. Jesus said in Matthew 18:10, "*Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*" God is guarding those little ones with His guardian angels. I know that mothers have a proclivity to worry about the most intricate details concerning their little ones. Well, not to worry, Moms! - they are in good hands at the passing. The Bible says of Lazarus' passage, "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom..." Luke 16:22.

## **3. We shall see our children again.**

The Cheesemans are some of our finest church members. Yesterday I received a call from John informing me that Stacy had miscarried. I asked Stacy if I could give her testimony of the passing of her little one and she graciously granted me permission. Please know, I would not have otherwise taken this liberty on such a sensitive topic.

There are so many things going through my mind and heart right now. I have been told by mothers who have lost babies that they don't like to hear, "Well you're young, you can have more." Mothers have told me this is like a knife to their heart because it devalues the unique life that their little child has. Children are not just a mix of gene pool thrown randomly into the universe. They are not just the byproduct of procreation. They are unique individuals made and fashioned by God for a very specific purpose and every one of them hold a very near and dear place in God's heart. That baby was a one and only child; there will never be another one like it in the history of the world past or world to come. Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world - born and unborn.

The difficulty we have at a time like this is wondering what the purpose of bringing this little one here so briefly for these few special, precious weeks when the mother gently touches her abdomen with a tenderness that only a mommy can do with a heart full of wonder. Wondering what will the baby be...a boy...a girl? Will he or she grow up to be someone the world will know about or will he or she live a quiet life before God, their family, their church, and their local community. And the mother prays, "Just keep my baby healthy and let this little one bring glory to you, dear Lord." To all my precious parents I say, the wonder

still goes on. That little one is as alive now as he or she was one week before they passed. He or she is now in the presence of the Heavenly Father. Our Lord is smiling on him or her right now.

One of the most moving stories I have come across is the story of Colton Burpo, son of Todd Burpo who wrote the book, "Heaven is For Real." In the book, Colton, a little boy who passed over to the other side, came back with information that could not have been coincidental. I am going to relate to you one of Colton's episodes by memory, so bear with me if I don't get it word perfect. Some time after his "resurrection" Colton asked his mommy about his older sister that he saw in Heaven. (Keep in mind, Mr. and Mrs. Burpo had never told Colton about the miscarriage of a sister). Mrs. Burpo said, "Colton, you don't have an older sister." He said, "Yes, I do, didn't she die in your tummy?" Then he cheerfully bounced away to play. His mother called him back and said, "Colton, don't leave me like this; tell me what you mean." Then Colton went into detail of a little girl whom he met who introduced herself to him as his sister and explained in children's terms the miscarriage that brought her to heaven. Colton said to his mom that his sister said, "I am up here waiting for mommy to give her a big hug as soon as I see her."

Stacy received the tragic, heartbreaking news about her "Baby Cheese" (as she referred to this little Cheeseman) and followed a tradition of getting it a teddy bear as she and John had done for their two older children, Gracie and Daniel. The Lord gave Stacy the most beautiful way to serve as a memento of her little one. She took the replica of the little brass feet representing the unborn whom we commemorated on Sanctity of Life Sunday this past January and she placed it over the heart of the teddy bear. We all need a place to mourn and remember how precious life is and even more precious, the life of our own flesh and blood. So Stacy, John, Gracie and Daniel have a small teddy bear monument that says, "We love you, Baby Cheese. We shall miss you, but we'll all see you on the other side." This is one of the most wonderful aspects of Heaven -- it will be a family reunion! So to all of the many moms and dads of Christchurch who have tearfully broken the news to us of your miscarriages, cheer up, for "*...Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 19:14). The little children, Baby Cheese and all her or his friends are in better company than Pastor Pope's arms at baby dedication; they are all in the arms of the Savior who has covered them with His atoning blood and full blessing, having entered Heaven and the full joy of the Lord.

-Pastor Pope-