

Message for the Funeral of Darlene DeVos, wife of former Pastor Paul DeVos, Pastor of our church from 1963-1971, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall at the Bybee & Davis Funeral Home in Knoxville, Iowa. on Wednesday, April 21st, 2021.

I am very glad to have had the privilege of getting to know Darlene over the past years. When her husband Paul, former pastor of our church from July of 1963 to May of 1972 died back in October of 2003, I had become the pastor of the Reformed Baptist Church in Tama a few months before. However, we had not been able to sell our house in Davenport yet, and so every Sunday during that year we drove from Davenport in the Quad Cities, to Tama, so that I could preach and administer the ordinances. So, when Paul died, Jenni and I were able to attend his funeral service here in this place. I wish that I could have met Paul and gotten to know him better. But, thankfully I have had opportunity to know Darlene. May the Lord give me help now, to speak of her life, and Christ whom she loved and served, for the next few minutes. I want to begin by reading for you Darlene's life verses and then tell you what they meant to her, and what they should mean for you.

Romans 14: 7-9 – “For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.” “For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord.” “Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.” “For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the living and the dead.”

These verses are perfectly appropriate for us to think about on this occasion. It is my prayer that just as they spoke to Darlene at many points in her life, that they will speak to us, now. Those of you who knew Darlene well, you know that these verses were fulfilled in her life in a very exemplary way. If Darlene were here with us today she would want me to share with you the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. She knew, as a pastor's wife, that a funeral is one of the best of places to preach the gospel. You may have heard the gospel before, but if you have, then I must ask – have you believed in Christ? Do you you know Christ, the One who died and rose and lived again, so that He might be your Lord? It is appropriate to ask ourselves at this time – Am I the Lord's? Do I belong to Him?

Think about these words once again. “Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.” “For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of the living and the dead.” The apostle Paul is talking here about Christ's having died so that He might be the Lord of both the living and the dead. Now, it is true that Christ already is Lord of all. He is Lord of heaven and earth. He is Lord over all men and nations, by God's appointment. God appointed His Son to be our Savior from eternity past, from before time began. And then He gave Him as Lord, as a gift to sinners; He sent Him into this fallen world, so that people would not perish in their sins; that is, He gave Him so that they would not die and end up in the place of eternal punishment.

You remember that most famous of verses: John 3: 16 – “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.” That's the gospel. But the question is, have you believed in Him so that you will not perish in your sins? For sometimes a person will very casually say that they believe, and yet nothing changes in their life. They do not renounce sin. They do not try to live their life according to the Bible, God's word. They have not been born again. They still love only the world and the things of the world. They are still living for themselves.

These verses are asking each of us the question – Does Christ have full authority over my life? Do I realize that I, as one who would be a Christian, or who is a Christian, was bought with a price? Is it my greatest desire to live for Christ, and walk with Him, and learn from Him, on the path of righteousness? The person who really knows God, who really is a Christian,

they want Him not only to be their Savior, but to be their Lord. You want Him to rule over you, and direct you in righteousness. You want Him to show them the path of life, to give you spiritual light so that you can see what is the right thing to do in every situation, so that God will be pleased. You want to live to God's glory and not your own. You want to die to sin and live to righteousness. You want to want to repent and turn from all of your sins, so that you might please Him, your Lord, and have fellowship with Him, and in this good way show forth your love for their Him He died for this very thing, our text says. Oh, this is what dear Darlene came to know personally, and she loved her Lord for it; that He would die for her sins, and be her Lord to guide her, care for her, watch over her in every way.

Now, you might think that because she was married to Paul, who was a pastor, that he would have been the first one of the two of them, who came to know the Lord. But listen as I read to you from her Memoirs. It was the summer of 1951. They were living on the 80 acre farm south of Knoxville in the Gosport area. She and Paul were invited by the Duane Langs to go to church meetings. They were folks that lived near to them on a farm near to theirs; they started asking them to come to church. It was a GARB church group who met in a miner's lodge in Melcher. And so, they went to the tent meetings and to some Sunday services. Darlene said that the Leslie Mendenhalls loaned them a Bible and encouraged them to read it.

That last week in November of 1951, Darlene received Christ as her Savior, beside her bed, after being under conviction of her sins. That was the beginning for her; receiving Christ, having dealings with God in prayer over her sins, and believing that God would forgive her of all of her sins if she believed in Christ. They continued attending church there in Melcher, Iowa. And then, some months later, Paul received Christ, in March of 1952 after a preacher from Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago spoke to their church group. What a mercy this was, saving them in such close proximity in time. And then they were both baptized at the Baptist Church in Monroe, Iowa on Easter Sunday of 1952. That was the beginning of their Christian life together. They came to saving faith in Christ. It was the major turning point in their lives, because God was working strongly and powerfully in each of their hearts.

Well, if you would know God, if you would have eternal and everlasting life, this is where it must begin for you too. This is what you must do; believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and receive what He has done to your mind and heart. What do have to believe in order to be saved? You must believe that Christ lived righteously for you; on your behalf, that is, even for you a sinner. In Romans 5, it says that it was while we were yet sinners that Christ died for us. And while we were still without strength, spiritually speaking, that Christ died for the ungodly; people who do not yet know Him. It was because Jesus was not a sinner, that His life and His death can save you. He was perfect in His heart, His words, and His life, perfect in every way. And yet He had to work out a righteousness for you the sinner, a righteousness which God would accept. He had to obey God in your place, obey Him perfectly. He had to obey Him to the point of death, on your behalf; even the death of the cross.

And so, because He obeyed God's law perfectly, and died and rose again, then you should understand that God then can impute righteousness to you when you believe in Him. He can charge Jesus' perfect righteousness to your legal account, and then God looks at you, and He sees you as He would see Jesus, as perfect. And so now, by faith, you receive the spiritual benefits of what Christ did by His righteous life and sacrificial death. You believe, and you receive Christ and His great salvation as yours. You received it as a free gift. But you realize that the cost was so very great to Christ, to purchase you. He paid the punishment for your sins, and He then joyfully gives you this grace to cover all your sins.

God gives you the robe of Christ's righteousness, and you wear in His sight. And this robe covers all your mistakes and sins, not only the sins and mistakes that you made before you believe and were saved. But it covers all of the mistakes you make and the sins that you commit even afterwards, all throughout your whole Christian life. That is what it means to be justified by faith.

But that is only the beginning of the Christian life. The rest of your life is learning to live to Him, learning to do His will at every point, learning to glorify Him by the way that you think and speak and do things, so that He is pleased with you, and your life becomes a great witness to the mercy and grace that He has shown you.

Oh, this is where the action is for those who are true Christians. You press on to know the Lord. You no longer want to live to yourself. You want to live to Him who loved you and gave Himself for you. You want to be righteous and holy because He is righteous and holy. You want to be loving and faithful and true to God's word the Bible, because Jesus was this way, and you want to be like Him. Let me ask if this is the language of your heart today? Ah, this is what Darlene would want for you, more than anything else. This is what she would rejoice over greatly, concerning you; if she could hear and know, even in heaven where she is now, that you belong to Jesus. That whether you live or die, that you are His. She would be so happy to know that following Jesus is the highest motivation of your life. Is it? Oh, let us remembering Darlene's life for what it was; living to Him, and dying to Him.

You see, you will not live to yourself if you really know God. Darlene knew the truth of this. For if you knew her at all, you knew that she lived for God. And I, and others here today, we can state, that she did not die to herself. As many of you know, she had been in the Sunnyhill Nursing Home for the past three and a half years. She had largely lost her eyesight and her hearing, and yet, to those of us who knew her, we knew that she was living for her Lord, right there in that place. And we knew that she was doing her dying to the Lord as well. He was right there with her; comforting her, encouraging her, strengthening her in her inner person, in her heart, so that she could still joy, and rejoice every day, knowing that she was His. Through this means of momentary light affliction, (that is how she sees it now) she was dying to herself, but she living to His glory.

All of us who were looking on, we knew that she was looking to the Lord in faith. We knew she was greatly desiring that He would take her home to be with Him. But we also knew that since was trusting in Christ, that she was willing to wait His good time for Him to come and take her to Himself. She would live, beholding His glory in her heart. She would live, holding sweet communion with Him, there in her heart, all the way until she came to the place where she passed through the river of death, that final Jordan, into eternal glory. Praise be to God for a life like hers! We need to remember it. Was it not a beautiful thing, the way she lived, and the way she died?

I can personally testify, that in the times that I visited her, that her spirit was very good, even though she was in this very difficult situation of having to wait the Lord's time to take her to Himself, as He did this past Saturday night. What had she been doing for the past 3 and a half years? She had been looking at the things which are not seen, the eternal things. She remembered and meditated on the things that she had memorized from the Bible. She was remembering the promise, that if her earthly house, her earthly tent, her body, was destroyed, she would have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Now, this doesn't mean that she received a new body the moment that she died and was welcomed into heaven. That will have to wait until the resurrection of all the dead on the last Day, when Christ returns. But when Darlene entered heaven, her spirit entered into the building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Her spirit met and beheld Christ personally for the first time. Her spirit was reunited with her husband Paul's once again, and with all the spirits of all just persons, who have died and their spirits have been made perfect. And this is why the Lord Jesus in John 14: 1 says – "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you." "I go to prepare a place for you."

So, every believer in Christ will have their own place which Christ has prepared for their spirit to live in until the resurrection from the dead. But listen to what it says in Philippians 3: 20 concerning this. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior,

the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body, that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

I want you to remember Darlene as a woman who lived by faith, who walked by faith, and not by sight. She fixed her eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith, and had joy in serving Him all the days of her life, after she came to know Him. Surely goodness and mercy followed her all the days of her life, and she will now dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Let us rejoice that it is so, and worship the Lord our God for having given her to us for the years that He did.

Let's pray together:

Father, How precious in Your sight is the death of Your godly ones. Here at this time and in this place, we want to thank you and praise You for the gift of dear Darlene to us. We praise You for the time that You gave her to us. We pray that each of us would take to heart the truth of our need to walk with You, even as she did. We pray that by faith and prayer and having fellowship with You in our hearts, that we would come to know You better and better, as we go through this life, so that we may, when we meet You face to face, not be ashamed, but be radiant. Bless us now with our time together at the Graveside service, and our fellowship with each other at this time. May we all look forward to meeting You face to face in the eternal kingdom. For we pray these things in Jesus precious name. Amen.