
No Man is an Island

by: Ronald L. Dart

"No Man is an Island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

John Donne wrote these words many years ago and he touched on a great truth and I don't think he even knew the degree to which he did. Sometimes I think deeply to what it means to us to lose a great man.

Winston Churchill

I was living in England at the time when Winston Churchill died in January 1965, and it is strange in a way, it didn't seem in a way like a great loss because he was very old, and by the time he died he was not very productive. I think the last picture perhaps in his life, the one that hangs in my memory of him towards the end of his life, is one of him sitting on a chair down by the pool of his, that he created himself, down at Chartwell, wearing an overcoat because it was a dampish looking day and a humbug on his head. The photograph is shot from behind, and he looks heavy and tired and old and very much alone.

Very few things have ever conveyed it like that did, it was almost as though he had been taken and used up for every bit of good that he had to offer in the world and everything had been wrung out of him in his ninety-one years.

But it was a terrible loss. They loaded his body on a train for the journey to his burial place in Bladon where he was born, and where his mother and father were buried. At every rail crossing, at every bridge, at every little town and hamlet where the train passed, people were out in their hundreds and their thousands at every one of those locations, and old veterans, some standing and some in wheelchairs saluted Winston as he went by, with tears running down their faces.

What a great man and what a great loss and I don't know if they really realized what they had lost, until he was gone.

When you consider what he knew, when you consider what he had experienced and where he had been, he was a fount of knowledge, of experience, of wisdom that would serve us very well right now in this world.

But he is gone. He is lost to us except for his books. We can't ask him questions, we can't go to him for advice, we can't call him on a television program and ask Winston what he thought we ought to do about the situations we face in the world.

I doubt if anyone really knew what they had lost until he was gone. I to this day hearken back on his passing and wonder as to how I let it go by me so easily without going down to one of those railroad crossings and saluting this great man as he went to his grave.

A Death is a Loss to us All

But our loss in this kind of thing is not limited to great men, like Winston Churchill. As John Donne wrote: "The death of every man and every woman is a loss to us all." We often go on oblivious to what we have lost, because we never ask them while they were alive.

Do you have any idea what a mother load the experiences of life is, it is a staggering mother load of value, experiences, of wisdom, of knowledge, of love, of all of the things that we human beings produce that is the best of us, and even out of the worst of us grows knowledge and experiences and wisdom, and I don't know if we understand how much of it there is.

Most of us have some idea of the value of winning. I don't think we appreciate nearly enough the treasure that exists in losing. The chances are that most of us learn more from our losses than we do from our wins. We grow more in our pain, than we do in our pleasure. We come to understand better in our failures, sometimes, than we do in our successes. It is just the way we human beings are. Does it mean anything at all for me to say to you, that there is tremendous value and great knowledge to be gained in pain and suffering. It is a tremendous value to us when a man or a woman dies, all that wisdom is lost to us and all of the love is gone. It isn't the great men, it isn't the great women, it is true with the least of us as it is of anyone.

Some Know Things that Others Don't Know

Do you suppose that God wants in His family, people who know what it is like to live without the use of their legs? You do understand don't you that people who do not have the use of their legs know things that you do not know. They understand things that you do not understand. I remember well a young couple both in wheelchairs, a man and his wife. It was interesting to talk to them and see how they would explain things and see how they reacted to the world, and I began to understand that they knew things that I did not know.

People who are suffering from the ravages of cancer and the pain, who are trying to stay off of the pain medication as much as they can because they want to have the contact with their family with their mind still intact and they grit their teeth against the pain to go on, and do you understand that these people know things that we don't know? They see things that we don't see, and when they are gone, we don't have any way of accessing what they have learned.

People who have to fight their way out from under the curse of alcoholism know things that we don't know. You only have to be around a few of them from time to time and when they talk about this sort of thing among themselves to begin to realize that you are an outsider in their world. You don't know what they know. You have no idea of what it means to win that battle or to lose it.

When we lose these people whoever they might be, we lose all of the wisdom, and all of the experiences that they have paid so dearly to attain.

God Has a Purpose in Mind

That is not to say that God caused these losses or causes these pains, what it does say is that God allows us to suffer with a goal in mind, a purpose in mind. He is going somewhere, and He has something He is trying to get done.

God does not want divorce, but He wants people in His family who have gone through a divorce. Strange thing to say, but the reason is that only they can tell us how important it is to marry well. They have the experience of one who did not, and they have things to tell the rest of us.

Only those who have been through it know the terror of the abuse in the night when a drunken husband comes home, they know these things. You and I have heard about them by the hearing of the ear, but we don't understand it. Only they know the crushing pain of having someone they love with all of their heart, soul and strength become an enemy and betray them, turn away and leave.

Have You Been Betrayed?

You know it is not all to dissimilar to what Jesus experienced when He was betrayed by Judas in the garden of Gethsemane. Many of you have gone through such a betrayal, and you know things that the rest of us don't know.

I think God wants in His family people who have finished life in a marriage of fifty years, sixty years, sixty-five years, and the reason for that is that these people understand love in a way that none of you newlyweds do. By newlyweds I mean less than twenty-five years of marriage.

There is in the world of ours an incredible reservoir of love, but when the people who carry this love are gone, have we lost that love for good? Is it gone, never to come back to us? Is all of the suffering that ends a man's life pointless? Is the love gone? Is the suffering gone? Is it just here today and gone tomorrow? It is a tough question to ask.

Will a Man Live Again?

The Book of Job is a little hard to follow, but he makes one of the most profound statements in the Bible on this question. I often refer to it in a funeral. He says in Job 14:1 "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. {2} He comes forth like a flower and is cut down". This is brutal language, a few days, full of trouble, he comes forth like a flower and is cut down.

That is the way that Job looked at this time in his life. He goes ahead and agonizes over this in his lengthy way and then he comes to this statement in verse 13: "O that you would hide me in the grave". I am tired of life, I just want to get the pain over with, the discomfort, the misery, the humiliation over with, all of what I am going through, I just want to get it all over with. "Just hide me in the grave, until your wrath be past". Basically, he is saying to hide him in the grave and keep him secret until your wrath is past but "appoint me a set time and remember me!"

You don't have to look too deeply to see what Job is driving at here. He says that if we look at this world as man looks at this world that whenever we die it is over and we can forget about it. But he says "No, no, I want you to appoint me a time and remember me, think about me. Verse 14: "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, until my change comes" {15} "You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands."

When I read this, I don't have a great comparison to it, but I know that in my study at home, I have on a high shelf a ham radio, because I have a ham license. I have the radio, all of the antenna equipment that I would need to throw a wire out the window, to tune it up and go on the air. I used this once upon a time, but I no longer have time for it anymore, so I put them on the shelf. There may come a time when I will remember them, and I will bring them down and I will use them one more time. I imagine that some of you that have hobbies know what I am talking about. Ladies who have quilts, men who work on model airplanes, or whatever your hobby is. You may reach a certain point on a project and you fold up that quilt and put it on the shelf and say, "I will come back to that next spring".

An Unfinished Work

The way I take this is Job understands himself as an unfinished work, that whatever God has to do with him is not going to be finished now, that what I am going through now, the pain that I am going through now, the discomfort, the humiliation, these friends of mine that I am enduring now. All of this is a part of an ongoing process and I just wish that I could go on the shelf for a while and be left alone in peace and that you would appoint me a time and come back and remember me. I know that "you will have a desire of the work of your hands."

Job saw himself as an unfinished work. He wanted God to do this. The people of Job's era could not have had a finished doctrine of the resurrections. There is no way that they could have understood or argued about this. I think it would have been a meaningless discussion to talk about one, two or three resurrections, but one thing was clear, Job knew God and he knew that nothing that God did was without a purpose, without a goal, everything that God did had a point and he knew that God knew what was going on in his life at that moment.

Job had to consider that there is something out there, somewhere, that God has in mind that we are going to. So Job knew that if a man dies he will live again.

The apostle Paul talked about some of these things in the same way, "through a glass darkly". He and others saw a resurrection and they inferred that it was to finish a work. Paul writing to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 2:9 wrote: "As it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him.

{10} But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Now here is my question for Paul, "When you wrote that, did you think that the Holy Spirit had revealed it all? You knew of course that you were seeing things men in generations that had gone by had never seen. You were seeing things that they had no idea of, they did not know, they could not have known these things. Did you know then what now we know?" I think Paul would say "No, what I meant by this is, that the Spirit reveals them to us but as they are revealed they still are through a glass darkly". "We know some things" and as he said in another place "We know in part, we understand in part, but then we shall know as we are known" (1 Corinthians 13).

So, it is that he says that somewhere out there in our future, lies a reason why we suffer the terrible things we do. If this life were all there is, then all of this suffering is pointless. All of the hurt and all the agony means nothing. If you know God at all, you have to know that is not possible.

The Jews Rejected the Gospel

All of this laid heavy on Paul's mind when he wrote his letter to the Romans. It is not entirely clear why he decided to go into this in this letter, but I am glad he did. By the time he wrote this letter there was plenty of time for him to digest the fact that the vast majority of the Jews, his own people, were rejecting the gospel and worse that they would continue to do so. It is very clear in Paul's writings that this hurt, and it hurt bad. In Paul's way of thinking it wasn't supposed to happen this way.

Paul said in Romans 9:1 "I say the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit, {2} that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. {3} For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, {4} who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises". They have so much but everywhere I go they are slamming the door in my face. They won't listen. They turn their backs. Seeing so many wise old rabbis, good old men, fine gentlemen with an encyclopedic knowledge of the Scriptures, who could cite whole sections out of Isaiah, whole sections out of the Torah, who knew their Bible from front to back. Seeing these fine old gentlemen resist the gospel, turn their back on it, get angry with Paul, turn red in the face, demand that he get out of the synagogue, had to hurt. I think that Paul had to think what a terrible loss it was to the early Church that men with this kind of knowledge were not a part of what the Church was doing and not a part of where the Church was going. In the rest of this chapter Paul works his way through the history that underlines all of this and I will not take you verse for verse at this time. You can study it later.

In Romans 10 Paul begins by summarizing the problem in verse 1: "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. {2} For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. {3} They are being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."

They are zealous, they believe, they want to go, but they just cannot come together on this particular question. Paul supports this at some length in chapter 10 and he comes finally to chapter 11 and time will not permit me to develop chapter 11 fully.

Paul asks the question to begin with in verse 1: "Has God cast away His people?" Here we are, all of these wonderful people, who have rejected the gospel, turned their back and walked away from it. Has God cast them away? Paul says "Oh no, I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. {2} God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew."

Then Paul proceeds with other aspects, about what Elijah said, and Isaiah said. Then he says in Romans 11:5: "Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

God Blinded the Jews Spiritually

Now this is encouraging but it does not answer Paul's question. He is saying that God has not cast off all of Israel, there is a remnant that shall be saved. Well, ok, but my question still is, what about the rest of them? Will God reject them? He develops that thought and he says in Romans 11:7-8: "What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks for; but the elect has obtained it, and the rest were blinded. {8} According as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of slumber, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, unto this day.'" Now that is one of the most troubling things in this whole thing. He basically says, God shut them up, He has slammed the door on them, God Himself closed them up in a state of unbelief. It is almost implied that He didn't have to do that, but He did.

And Paul is still struggling. This section of Romans 9 through 11 is really fascinating. It is almost a stream of consciousness of Paul working his way through this difficult question with us so that we can try to understand what it is.

Paul then says in Romans 11:11: "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbids." What, I don't get it. We've got this remnant that is saved and the rest of them are on the outs and then he says, "If any should stumble, they should fall". No, well, what? You can get exasperated with Paul at times, with his run-on sentences and the length that he goes into it, and you say, what are you driving at here? He is saying, "I am talking to you Gentiles, because I think that there are some things that you need to understand."

God Will Raise the Jews from the Dead

Paul says in verse 15: "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Now I can't conclude from that verse alone that Paul is saying that the only way we are going to save the rest of these Israelites is in a resurrection someday, but it is significant that he pulls this phrase in at this point, because the truth to tell, there is no way to handle the rest of these people unless you do raise them from the dead, because so many of them had, by the time that Paul wrote this, rejected the gospel and died. They were gone, and they weren't coming back any time soon.

Paul then says in verse 16: "For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. {17} And if some of the branches be broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree; {18} Don't boast yourself against the branches."

The Olive Trees

A friend of mine raised an interesting question that I hadn't thought about. We approach this as the tame or natural olive tree is Israel and the wild olive tree is the Gentiles. His question was: "Is the olive tree really Israel or is it Christ?" I had to look at it and when you go to the root, and the fatness of this tree, the root has to be Christ, not Israel. Israel did not bear Him, He bare them. He says here: you "partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree," you have come in and are partaking not of Israel, you are partaking of Christ. {18} "If you boast, you don't bear the root, the root bears you", you will say the branches were broken off, not from Israel, they were broken off from Christ. Think about it. All of the Jews out there were not broken off from Israel, they were still Israelites. They were still in their towns and their cities, they were being Jews like they always had been. They were not cut off from that, they were cut off from God. They were cut off from Christ.

Continuing in verse 20: "Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: {21} For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not you. {22} Behold then the goodness and the severity of God". If you don't know both sides, then you don't know God. "Behold then the goodness and the severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in his goodness: otherwise you also shall be cut off. {23} And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in". Into what? Into Christ. If they don't stay in unbelief, "God is able to graft them in again. {24} For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more than these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? {25} "For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

All Israel Shall Be Saved

Continuing in verse 26: "And so all Israel shall be saved". What are we supposed to do with that? It's ok to say, well, sometime out in the future all of the Israelites will be saved who are alive, but what about all of those that we lost? All of those that died? All of those fine scholarly men, all of the people who tried to serve God all of their lives, but when it came to Jesus, they just simply couldn't believe in Him. What about those people? In verse 26, the apostle Paul says that "All Israel shall be saved!" The whole idea of what Paul is giving us here, is that God has shoved some people away for a while, and this is an interesting thing to think about in this regard, because the clinging to Judaism, the clinging to the oral law, the clinging to Jewish traditions, all of this was a barrier to the Gentiles coming into the faith. They faced this question in Acts the fifteenth chapter, at the Jerusalem conference, when they worked out this question of whether or

not the Gentiles, when they come into the faith, had to be circumcised or not. They had to settle that issue, but if it had been left to the Jews, the Gentiles would never have gotten in at all.

So God pushes these people away for a while. This is hard to understand but Paul says later in Romans 11:33 "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"

In Romans it is clear to me that Paul is looking ahead to a time in the future, when God is going to rectify the essential alienation of Israel, for some period of time and that He does not mean, by any means, to allow those people that He pushed away to remain unvisited and unsaved if indeed they will finally hear.

Millennial Kingdom of God

How is God going to do it? I don't know, because I only see through a glass darkly, but looking through the glass darkly I see images moving around in the background. One of these is revealed in the twentieth chapter of Revelation. It is a section of Revelation that most people who read the Bible very much have read and are familiar with. Christ has returned and in Revelation 20:1 "I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. {2} He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; {3} and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. {4} And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

A thousand years is a millennium and so the millennium passes into our vocabulary as a synonym for the time of the Kingdom of God, the time of Christ's rule upon the earth, the time when the Saints will rule with Christ for one thousand long glorious years. The millennium, we talk a lot about that. We have long believed that the Feast of Tabernacles, if it didn't picture the millennium, at least it looked forward to the millennium and the time of Christ's rule.

First Resurrection

Then John says something fascinating: "This is the first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5). There is absolutely no reason for the word 'first' to be there if there isn't a second resurrection. By saying that, He implies a second, and here we are faced with a question: We have a resurrection at the beginning of the thousand years and we are going to have a resurrection at the end of the thousand years, what are we going to do with this second one?

Second Resurrection

What is the second resurrection for? What is going to happen in that resurrection? I suppose we could find out by reading on in Verse 5: "But the rest of the dead did not live again until the

thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. {6} Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years. {7} Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison {8} and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle." They are going to fight, and God is going to destroy all of them.

You have to wonder about this point in time, how on earth, at the end of a thousand years of Christ's reign, that there are still people who are deceived by Satan the devil, but there are. It is a testimony of the stubbornness, the self-will of man, that after all of that, there will still be people who won't believe and can't accept God's way of life.

Verse 10: "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were cast, and he will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

White Throne Judgment

And here comes the part that we like: Revelation 20:11: "I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. {12} And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." What is it when the dead stand? It is a resurrection! Right? So here we have a resurrection. We already had one. He called it the first resurrection. Now we are at the second resurrection.

Book of Life

John said in verse 12 "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life". Why is the book of life being opened here? You might say to see who is written in it. No, all of the people whose names were written in the book of life were in the first resurrection. There is only one reason why the book of life should be opened in the second resurrection, and that is to make new entries into the book of life. Now the mechanism by which all of this is done, the time that it takes, these are things that we have talked about and speculated over and thought about for many years because we have always looked upon this holy day, the Last Great Day of the Feast, as that time following the reign of Christ that pictures the second resurrection and the time when that judgment takes place. We have talked about it, we have speculated, we have wondered how it will work. We have had different theories. I don't know which one is right, but I will tell you what I do know, there is a time when the dead, small and great, will have their time before God, and it will be a time in which their name can be entered into the book of life, even though it had not been in this life.

Second Chance

Some people call that a 'second chance', and they speak of it as though that was a bad thing. I am over seventy now, and in my lifetime, I have generally considered a 'second chance' to be a very good thing. I have had a lot of them, and I have been grateful for every one of them. This is not really a 'second chance' at salvation for these people, because they really never had their

‘first chance’ before. It is a ‘second chance’ at life and the salvation that they can achieve in this life. How long will they be given to do that, how will it be done, the mechanism of it, well, we could talk about that for a long time. What we are looking at here is that it happens.

And then once again, we have this time when everyone whose name is not written in the Lamb’s book of life is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:14-15). All of the loose ends are finally gathered up, cut off, finished, done, it’s over.

Suffering and Death

There is a barrier out there, in the future beyond which we cannot see, we can only infer what it might be. But one of the clues of what might be out there is the unrequited suffering that goes on in this life.

Many of us have a good friend who is not with us now, he may be at home with his wife who is in a nursing institution and she is dying of colon cancer and suffering from Alzheimer’s at the same time. The poor woman is enduring terrible pain, and the suffering that goes on with cancer and cancer treatments and because of the Alzheimer’s dementia , she doesn’t realize what’s happening to her as she comes and goes and she will say things to her husband as though the world was normal and say "Let’s go to the movies tonight" and things like that that would break his heart. He has to be there for her and smile. We communicated about this for a while and I tried to help him to understand the situation that he was going through, because it was tearing him up and I said: "Friend, can you imagine what it would be like for her if you weren’t there? If she had to go through this alone?" He hadn’t really thought about that, he was giving himself to her, he was there every day, he was there by her bedside, he was doing everything that needed to be done and it was tearing him apart. I pointed it out to him; "Where would she be if you weren’t there, look at what a blessing it is to her that you are there". As I think what they were enduring, and they will go through this and she will die, and he will walk out into the sunshine and try to go forward from there and one of these days he will be gone.

What is All of This For?

I ask myself what is all of this for? It donned on me several years ago and I began to realize that when I reach my highest utility, when I come to the place when I am at my best, when I have the most to contribute in terms of knowledge, wisdom, understanding, when I get to the peak of my ability, I will leave, I will be gone, I will die. And you kind of wonder is this doing things backwards a little bit? Once we have reached our peak shouldn’t we have a little time to go forward and use what we have learned? I think about that, and about the developing of character in us. When I look at what is happening to my friends, I think to myself I don’t need that kind of character to walk on the streets of gold. I have all the character I need to be resurrected, don’t you? Don’t you have enough character for that?

God Has the Desire to the Work of His Hands

There is something else going on here and it is what Job was talking about when he said in Job 14:14: "When a man dies, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till

my change comes. {15} You will call, and I will answer you: you will have a desire to the work of your hands." That unfinished work has to go forward, and there are things for us to do that we cannot even imagine now, that what we are learning in this life, nor how much it costs for us to learn it, are necessary.

Everyone you have loved and lost will one day stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, and the book of life will be opened, and they will have a chance for their name to be written in that book. Paul says in Romans 11:30 "For as you in times past have not believed God, but now have obtained mercy through their unbelief: {31} Even so", he is talking to the Gentiles and then about Israel, "even so these have not now believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. {32} For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." Do you realize what he is saying here? He is saying that all of these Israelites that have been cut off, he is speaking to the Gentiles, will obtain mercy through your mercy. He implies from that that the Gentiles who will apply mercy to these people, it will be their work of reaching out to these people and bringing them back. Through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. I really would like that.

I would like to be instrumental in the salvation of someone who lived and died and never believed, wouldn't you? To be there with them and to talk to them and explain to them, to represent God, to sit on a tomb stone and wait for some poor wretch to come out of his grave and explain to him what happened and why it happened, and why it is good and where we are going. Here's why you had to take that bullet. Here's why God didn't answer your prayers and left you in wheelchair your entire life, by the way, did you notice that you don't need it now? To be able to point that out to someone, here's why he healed another blind man and left you sightless.

You know there is so much that we don't understand, but for me there is a beam of light like a razor and it points directly out into space. I have struggled for years with Isaiah 51 and I know that other translators have as well. I have to ask myself why a truth should so profound be expressed in such an oblique way. We will have to ask God about that, but I would like to take a moment with you in Isaiah 51 just to talk about it.

What Does the Future Hold?

In Isaiah 51:1 God says: "Listen to Me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the LORD." Hey, listen up, this is talking to you. "Look to the rock that you were cut out of." Look to the hole out of which you were dug, depending on who you are, go back and take a look at your roots and look at where you came from. Look at what kind of a person you are, look at what God has done with you so far.

"Look unto Abraham your father, and to Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. {3} For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found there, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." This sounds millennial doesn't it? {4} "Listen to me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light to my people. {5} My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, my arms shall judge the people; the isles shall

wait on me, and on my arm shall they trust. {6} Lift up your eyes to the heavens." Walk out tonight after the sun has gone down and it is fully dark and look up at the sky.

"Look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth under your feet will wax old like a garment, and everyone in it will die in the way: but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness will never be abolished." All of that stuff will go, the earth under you will go, the heavens will go, all of the people will go, but God's law will never be abolished.

Then verse 7: "Listen to me, all you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law." That's a new covenant idea isn't it? The new covenant is the writing of the Law in the heart and in the mind (Jeremiah 31:31-33.). Are you listening, because this is written to you? "Listen to me, all you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, don't you fear the reproach of men, and don't be afraid of their reviling's."

Wake up, listen to this folk. God is saying to you people who have His Law, "Don't be afraid of men who revile you for that." The time is going to come when you are going to have to measure up. You are going to have to stand up and be counted. You are going to have to say what you believe and that you stand for truth. You stand for morality. You stand for what is right and I don't want you to be afraid when that time comes.

{8} "For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation."

I have to think about this, because I have a voice that is going out to way over a hundred radio stations at over three hundred and fifty plays plus a week, and I am saying things out there to people that one of these days that will not go down very well. Already in Canada, I suppose if I lived in Canada, I could get fined for what I already have put on the air up there, because I have read the scriptures in the Bible that tell you that gay conduct is not permitted. There is going to be more of that, not less.

Let's continue in verse 9: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old."

He goes on and finally he is talking about us, those who know righteousness, people in whose heart is the Law and in verse 15 he says: "I am the LORD your God, who divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name. {16} And I have put my words in your mouth, and I have covered you with the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the land, and say to Zion, You are my people."

The translators have struggled somewhat with this. I did the word search and the word 'plant' is the same word that is used everywhere else like God planted a garden in Eden, people planted vineyards, they planted crops and here He says in verse 16: "And I have put my words in your mouth, and I have covered you with the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens." Well, what are we to make of that? It certainly sounds to me like, whenever we come to

understand what this universe is like, that something is going on. Of course, if God is not going to plant anything out there, what's it for? Why is it out there?

Scientists now tell us that the universe is 13.8 billion years old, give or take a couple of million years. Some people will write me after this and will say: "Oh no, the universe is only six thousand years old." We know that those galaxies out there, that their light has been coming to us for billions of years. I have no reason to doubt what scientists are finding in that regard. I have to realize that as I myself with a naked eye looking into the universe, it staggers me, and then I look at what they are showing us from the Hubbell telescope, which gathers information outside of the earth's atmosphere and it can see further and my mind is boggled by all of this stuff that I see, the billions of clusters of planets and stars that are out there. Why are they there? What are they for? What is God going to do with them? I don't know why He put this little verse in Isaiah 51, but it certainly matches what I begin to see happening, when I hold someone's hand in a hospital bed while they suffer great pain and finally die, that death is not pointless, that character is not lost, the love that was there is not gone, it is merely put away for a time until God calls and they answer Him, and He has a desire to the work of His hands.

We Suffer with Christ

Paul wrote in Romans 8:16 "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: {17} And if we are children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him." What does that mean? It basically means, that when you are laying on your hospital bed in pain, and your last days of life are beginning to creep upon you, you are not suffering alone. You are suffering with Christ. {18} "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. {19} For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. {20} For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, {21} Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

The whole creation that God has made is to be delivered into the liberty that you and I now have. God is so far from finished, there is so much work to be done, so many things for us to learn, so much character to be built, wills to be strengthened, hearts to be made strong and courageous, knowledge to be conveyed, experience to be gained, wisdom to be developed. There is so much to be done, and each of us has so little time.

The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit RLDEA.com where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.

Discussion Questions

1. What are your thoughts about Mr. Dart's point that we most likely do not appreciate enough the value of losing?
2. How have you experienced knowledge and wisdom from others that have different trials than you?
3. How have your own experiences helped others see life from a different perspective?
4. How valuable to you are the trials that you have gone through?
5. What are your thoughts about Job chapter 14?
6. Why do you think that there will be still people on the earth after the thousand year reign of Christ that will be deceived by Satan?
7. Do you agree that many people will have a second chance?
8. What are your thoughts about Mr. Dart's thought that when he would finally be at his best and have the most to "contribute in terms of knowledge, wisdom, understanding," basically at his peak, that would be when he would die?
9. Do you think that what we learn in this life will aid us in helping others in the next?
10. Why do you think the universe is so vast?