

Gilbert Burnham Eulogy

2/28/2014

Solomon tells us in Ecclesiastes 7:2 that you have come to the best place there is to be while you live:

***It is better to go to a house of mourning
Than to go to a house of feasting,***

The funeral parlor is the better place than the Mardi Gras Ball. Why? Solomon tells us:

***Because that is the end of every man,
And the living takes it to heart.***

We gather here today in the name of the God who is the creator of the heavens and the earth, the judge of the living and the dead, and the savior of those who trust in His sent son. So while we all enjoy a good party in the house of feasting, we pray that by God's grace you would take these things to heart as we remember my father, Gilbert Elijah Burnham.

How can you sum up the life of this wonderful man in words? He was a faithful husband, father, brother, son and friend. A teddy bear to children, a superhero to kids, an example for youth, dependable to his peers, and honoring to his elders. He was a firm believer and student of discipline. Not only did he mold and shape his own and other children into better people by correcting disobedience and misbehaving, throughout his life he exercised great self-discipline and honed a tenacious work ethic that is unmatched in today's day and age. He could do anything he put his hands to and did not give up until it was accomplished. Once he got an idea in his head, he didn't give up until it was complete. We saw that when his health began to fail. Because he wouldn't give up, he beat so many odds, overcame so many setbacks, came back from near death so many times that I began to think the man might just live forever. Through God's grace, we were able to spend six more years with him after he had one of his lungs completely replaced, an operation that is still mind boggling to me.

In the end, when his health had failed to the point that it was difficult for him to do the simplest of things that most of us take for granted, like just breathing, I was reminded of another quality that marked him throughout his life, and that was doing things for others, no matter how difficult. There are countless examples of him helping family and friends fix cars, boats and appliances, or build and repair houses, and I'm sure every one of those instances were challenging to him and took a lot of his strength. He cherished, protected and provided for his family, often when that meant denying himself comfort and conveniences. But never was his selflessness more apparent to me than in the end, when he was suffering so much just living life, but he would strive to hang on just for the sake of those who loved him. Even though he clearly had no desire to eat, he would still take a few bites or sips just to see his requesting family smile.

You see, my dad knew that this increasingly difficult life was not all there was, and he knew what awaited him in the life to come. As Hebrews 11:16 says: He desired ***"a better country, that is, a heavenly one."*** Yes, it was freedom from all of his pain and suffering, but it was more than

that. Of all of the wonderful things about this man that you, I or anyone can recount, the greatest is that he had his eternal hope in Christ, attributed all that he had from God, and trusted in God's sovereignty and providence even during the darkest hours of his life. He would recount these truths to his family in the humblest of ways, showing the sincerity of his convictions, and creating for us an example of a man of God.

Because of these convictions, he knew what awaited him in the life to come was unrestricted, unhindered and unlimited fellowship with the sovereign God of the universe that orders all things, and accomplishes all things according to His good pleasure. Revelation 21:4 says that:

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

And although he would be momentarily separated from his earthly family and friends, he would enjoy something far greater: The unmitigated glory of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the perfect God-man who humbled himself by giving up his heavenly glory to come onto the earth as the perfect obedient servant, and being sinless, died to forgive the sins of my dad, and whoever else trusts in Christ for their righteousness. As Jesus tells us in John 15:13:

"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

Although my dad had many good friends here on earth, none can match the eternal gracious gift given to him by Christ, and now is my dad's opportunity to enjoy being with Him.

My dad was a good man, but that is not why he was spared God's judgment and instead allowed to enjoy these blessings of heaven. In fact, none of us will enter heaven by being good, no matter how good we think we are, because there was only one truly good, and that was Jesus Christ. Yet 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that ***"For our sake [Christ] made him[self] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*** My dad is in the better place now because he did not trust in his own self-righteousness, but was covered by the righteousness of Christ. He is secured in Christ, and that is why we can confidently and sincerely sing "It is well with my soul", even having lost this dear man.

Dear family and friends, this is the reality, the end of everyone, as Solomon says. If my dad meant anything to you at all, please let this be his legacy to you and take this to heart: Seek Christ, put your eternal hope exclusively in Christ and not in your own works, realize that all that you have is from God, and trust in God's sovereignty and providence even during the darkest hours of your life. I pray that you will, and that you will also enjoy the blessings of heaven as my father is even now.