

BEHOLD, I AM DYING

By Rev. Donald Rose

The Bible portrays special moments when someone who is dying speaks wise and comforting words. Some have experienced special moments with people who have terminal diseases and know it. Trivial distractions of life become irrelevant to them. They are able to focus on things that are really important, and they are able to treasure the time that is left to them.

Theologian Emanuel Swedenborg says that there is from God an inflowing into each one of us of a love towards others and a wisdom that goes with love. Much of the time that influx is deflected and clouded by the worldly preoccupations of life as well as by our own selfish inclinations. But there are times when those things are quiescent and the love comes through unimpeded. A special example of such times is the period when death is near (*Heavenly Secrets 2041*).

This brings us to the touching Biblical examples. Consider these words of Jacob in the 48th chapter of Genesis. “Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers.”

Jacob’s son Joseph speaks similarly near the end of the final chapter of Genesis. “I am dying; but God will surely visit you.”

After Genesis this theme continues. Moses becomes the central biblical figure. Much of the impact of the book of Deuteronomy is from the words of Moses spoken near the time of his death. “I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in... Be strong and of good courage.... The Lord is the one who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed” (Deuteronomy 31: 2, 6, 8).

Notice his calm confidence in future guidance. When we come to Samuel we find a serene appreciation of the past. Samuel said, “I am old and grayheaded.... Now therefore, stand still that I may reason with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous acts of the Lord which He did to you and your fathers... Fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you” (I Samuel 12).

Chapter 23 of 2nd Samuel says, “Now these are the last words of David.” In eloquent wisdom the old king David says, “He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.”

Swedenborg, as already mentioned, says “Good is continually flowing in from the Lord”, and when it is not obstructed, it becomes manifest (*Heavenly Secrets 3147*). A person

who reaches inward contentment “regards status and riches as of no importance, and eternal life as essential” (*Heavenly Secrets* 4981).

Although people in the last stages of life sometimes feel useless, they often have a valuable kind of wisdom that can touch our lives. We do well to listen to them, and we do well to embrace those words of Scripture in which someone who is dying brings a spirit of hope, saying, “God will be with you.”

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