

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, April 29, 2017

I had the distinct pleasure in sharing the podium with Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter years ago. Dr. Baxter is the most godly man I've ever had the pleasure to meet. I remember purchasing one of his many books during that CBMC Retreat entitled *THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH* published in 1987. I ended up loaning that book to a friend who returned it to me many years later. That book which was an exhaustive study on "heaven, hell and life beyond death" inspired me to recommit time to writing about spiritual matters and the uncertainty of life. Death is inevitable and dying is simply part of the process. It's a worthy topic since we will all experience it in God's time. So, we might as well deal with death and dying.

As a life and health insurance professional, I have a pretty good grasp of morbidity and mortality tables. In short, it's quite possible for one of my many clients to have one or more long-term disabling events during their lifetime, but eventually we all must face death. Over the past thirty-three years, I've handled well over a hundred life insurance claims. During that same period, I've handled several dozen disability and long term care insurance claims. We never know when or how catastrophes will strike, but inevitably they do. Yes, death is certain!

It's only been a few years since my parents passed into Glory. My Mom preceded my Dad by seven months and I remember how upset Dad was that God took Mom before him. He confided that he married a woman eight years younger so she would be able to take care of him in his later years. Then again, he never expected to live to see his one hundredth birthday! During the last few years of his life, Dad could hardly see and hear, but he continued to exercise and remain physically strong. He really didn't know how to let go. Then a few months before his 101st birthday he finally started giving up. I remember seeing him one last time on that final three day trip to Texas and making one more attempt at sharing the love of Christ with him. After visiting my Mom's graveside at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, my Dad was captive in the twenty minute car ride home. He didn't want to hear me talk about his salvation, but he did listen to me one more time.

Dr. Baxter lived to be ninety-six and I can still see him walking around Santa Barbara dressed to the tee with his plaid jacket, dress shirt and bow tie. He was a true gentleman who loved life and loved God with all his heart, mind and soul. I look forward to seeing him in Paradise one of these days. I'm sure he and Jesus have had many precious conversations over the years since he entered Paradise. After all, that's just what he did while here on this earth. Just as Paul shared in Philippians 1:21-24 *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in this body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body."* Dr. Baxter understood reality.

Like Paul, I too am looking forward to the day when I'll meet Jesus face-to-face, yet I love life and the daily encounters my Lord brings across my path. Genetically, I may reach that century mark just like my Dad, which is fine if that's God's will for my life. If He takes me before I reach that milestone, that too is well with my soul. And, I do look forward to being reunited with my parents one day in Heaven. Yes, my Dad did make that commitment to Christ just minutes before he died. I thank my cousin Mark Schraub for sharing the account with me and being there before Dad's death to offer him one last opportunity before he took his last breath.

Life is short and we have no way of knowing what lies ahead. You or a loved one may already be dealing with a serious illness, but we don't have to go through adversity on our own. Certainly friends and family can relieve some of the stress, but I've found the greatest strength comes from a personal relationship with Christ.

There's no time like the present to call upon Him. Let Him help you deal with the inevitable process we must all go through here on earth. Trust Him in your time of need.

Passages to Ponder: Job 42:1-6; Luke 23:39-43; John 14:1-6; 1 Corinthians 13:9-13

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Passages to Ponder: Job 42:1-6; Luke 23:39-43; John 14:1-6; 1 Corinthians 13:9-13

Job 42:1-6 New International Version (NIV)

42 Then Job replied to the LORD:

²“I know that you can do all things;
no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

³You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?’
Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know.

⁴“You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.’

⁵My ears had heard of you
but now my eyes have seen you.

⁶Therefore I despise myself
and repent in dust and ashes.”

Luke 23:39-43 New International Version (NIV)

³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

⁴³ Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

John 14:1-6 New International Version (NIV)

14 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Jesus the Way to the Father

⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

1 Corinthians 13:9-13 New International Version (NIV)

⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.