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THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

VOLUME XXIV ISSUE 5

MAY 20, 2000

A Message Of Hope

This spring a cousin died. This was the funeral message I wrote for her. The providential circumstances that caused this message to be written are such that I desired to share them with you.

Francis Kaye

On a day such as this day, one does not control his or her thoughts; those thoughts assume the mastery. One does not choose what to remember or how to remember what is to be recalled; memory revisits as it would and how it would, what it will. Consequently, our thoughts in these days shall and must come as waves that ebb and flow without our bidding and beyond our command. Long forgotten scenes, sounds, even smells sweep swiftly back across our senses flooding our hearts and minds with both pain and joy--

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this and that

Editors
 Jerald L. Manley
 Gary Roland
 Dorothy Gundersen

The years come and go with an urgency that is unnoticed for most of the life. It is only as we grow older (and no one ever grows younger) that we come to realize that life is to be lived not merely endured. By speaking of living life I do not deny that the young are not alive. They are, but they have no concept of what living life requires. To the young, life consists of breathing, eating, sleeping, and doing. As we finally come to maturity of judgment, we understand that life is more being than anything else. The line in Hamlet is seldom read as it should be, "To be, or not to be. That is *the* question." The young are asked, "What do you want to *be* when you grow up?" As we are growing up, we constantly ask ourselves, what do I really want to be? The issues of life are really summed up in the following

questions: "What will I be doing? —where will I be doing it? —how will I be doing it? —and, why will I be doing it? "How often do we commit to *be* somewhere or to *be* something? How many times do we hear the question, "Will you

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this and that

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be here?" And how often have we asked, "What will it take for you to *be* happy?" And, the most serious statement of life is that I heard Dr. Bob Jones express, "There was a time when you were not, but there will never again *be* a time when you are not. You will live somewhere forever." In other words, "You will *be* forever." You are a soul created by God to exist forever. The most important question one ever faces, is the simple question, "Where will you *be* when you no longer will be alive." Death moves us from the land of time into the realm of eternity. Eternity offers but two choices of residency: to *be* with Christ or to *be* cast into the Lake of Fire to *be* there evermore. If there is any doubt, I would plead with you to read "Message of Hope."

—Pastor Manley ☒

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this day, the only questions that are relevant. All else is meaningless if these cannot be answered in the affirmative.

As she intended for me to do and as she knew that I would, I plead with you today to be certain-sure that you are trusting in the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and in nothing else for your hope of Heaven.

Well, you called her "Mom" or "Gram'ma" or "Fran" or "Aunt Francis" or something else; I always called her Francis Kaye. So, now I come to the time to say, "Francis Kaye, I have tried to do precisely as you asked me to do. As best I could, I kept my promise and when I meet you in Glory, we will again pick up the pieces."

Now may the God of all comfort be that comfort that each of you need on this *day even as He was for her during all of her last days.*

Jerry Manley

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sometimes, doing so in the same instant, with the same wave. Decades are spanned in moments. Events widely separated as to both time and space are woven into a quilt whose patchwork so very strangely, but so very wondrously, represents that which was and which now exists only in these tides of remembrances. Even so, what I now say may seem disconnected or distracted; and it may be that it is that to you, but the connection is in my mind, by my mind, and the attraction is she.

When she called—*now it seems so long ago, yesterday it seemed such a short time back—to* tell me of the first medical diagnosis and the very real possibility that she could have this vicious disease that has taken her, it was not long in our conversation before we

Events widely separated as to both time and space are woven into a quilt whose patchwork so very strangely, but so very wondrously, represents that which was and which now exists only in these tides of remembrances.

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were discussing this very day. On that day, we walked our way through the inevitable, inescapable progression of the disease and this certain outcome. While neither of us shied from reality, the conversation was neither morbid nor depressive. It was simple. It was plain. It was open. She outlined her thoughts as to the course of action that she should take and she described her desires for others to follow in the eventuality that this possibility would prove to be fact. Her thinking was clear. Her plans were sound. Her spirit was excellent. I dare not say we were disassociated, cold, or unemotional, but I affirm to all that there was no word of dread, of regret, and no word of fear. Not then or in the conversations that followed over these few months did she ever, not even once, express resentment at her lot in life. From that first hard announcement, right through our last telephone visit, she was possessed with a calmness that made the bitter seem sweet. From the beginning, she knew what lay

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the questions and endure the battles. There in that *Greater Land of Heaven*, she now fully knows the answers, the reasons, and the results. She is forever beyond the reach of all things mortal.

You and I have such a day as this day waiting for each of us. Some day our family and our friends will gather, as do we now. Some day some preacher will be required to stand and speak to them on our behalf, as do I now for her. Will that preacher on your funeral day be able to recite your testimony of personal salvation? Will he be able to speak with confidence or only hold out a vague possibility or must he avoid that issue altogether? Will that preacher be able to speak on your funeral day with the confidence that you, being absent from the body, are present with the Lord in Heaven? What witness will you leave behind when you are no longer here? What testimony do you have now that can be remembered then? I ask these things because these questions are, on a day like

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coming months would take upon her husband, her children, and her family than she was about herself. I tell all of you, what I hope each of you already knows, she loved you. Again, I am grateful that she and I had a reunion and that I know these things for myself and that she asked me to bear witness for her.

Now, however, she and I again are parted. She is *There* and I am still here. Based on her witness, I have a confidence that she has gone ahead where I have also a *Home* waiting, provided, promised, and prepared by the One Who said that He alone was the Way, the Truth and the Life. Her trials are over; her journey done. She is *Home*. I stay here waiting another day of reunion.

You and I remain behind in this present world of the unknown and the unknowable, where pain and parting are daily fare. She has moved from this temporal lesser land into the *Eternal Better Land* where pain and parting are no more. We still struggle with

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ahead; but she also knew from Whose Hand it came. That was a settled matter and was never revisited. She understood no more than did I the 'why,' but that lack of understanding was understood as never understandable until we shall both stand in His presence. Therefore, by faith, she accepted it without complaint, remorse, or distrust.

Having spoken of physical things, we talked on that day more directly of spiritual matters. She again gave testimony of having placed her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour long ago and of her present confidence of His loving watchcare even in this new trial. We spoke of past failures and of previous times of renewed commitment. We also talked of the present. We rejoiced in the ever faithfulness of the Heavenly Father, even when we prove most unfaithful. We talked of the future both here and *After Here* and we spoke of meeting *There* if never again here.

During childhood, we had been rather

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close and in the last few years had renewed that closeness. Strangely, it was at this very juncture of the year that our pathways re-joined. Almost five years ago to the day, she and her husband surprised me by attending, unannounced, for Bible Conference in my church. Today, this year's Bible Conference prevents me from being present in Connersville fulfilling one of her last requests of me. As I say, the timing of the two events—her sudden arrival and our resumption of closeness and, now, her too-soon departure and our fresh separation—at the very same time of the year has genuine uniqueness, even strangeness. Yet, that very providential oddity conveys a wondrous message. It focuses that it was upon the Bible, centered upon faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that our renewal was founded. Our conversations over these last years largely were a time of sharing faith. There is, therefore, a marvelous comfort to me in this remarkable timing.

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That first Bible Conference, she and her husband stayed in Pensacola for a few days and we seemed to pick up the pieces exactly where they had been laid down years before and began putting the puzzle of life together. She and my wife quickly became close and Julie enjoyed their regular telephone visits. This all was rather difficult to accept in a way. Here it was, my cousin had come to my church—but not to hear *me* preach, she came for the *visiting* Bible Conference speakers. Then, she and my wife become close and have lengthy telephone conversations *without me*. Yet, having been renewed, the relationship between us was stronger than before.

I am grateful for these last few years. I can today testify of her repeated statements of love for her Lord, her family, her friends, and for me. When we talked of disease that took her and of what she unquestionably faced, she was more deeply concerned of the effect and the toll the then

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