

# Spared? Spared What?

*"...I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far..."  
Philippians 1:23 (NIV)*

This past summer I came close to death when a Strep A Septicemia infection began to make serious progress migrating up my right leg. The Doctors pumped several antibiotics into me through an intravenous line and the bacteria gave up the fight when it was 2/3 the way up my leg.

I had many friends wanting to see me or at least talk to me on the phone following my discharge from the hospital. The most common expression my friends used to describe my medical adventure was something along the line of God "sparing me".

I appreciate what my friends meant by that comment and I obviously thanked them for being concerned for my well being. But I began to think about the things from which I was spared. I was spared the sights and sounds of the city of God. I was spared the opportunity to walk the streets of gold. I was spared seeing the saints of the ages. I was spared seeing my parents, my older brother, his wife and his little daughter who died at birth. I was spared the remarkable experience of hear-

ing music beautiful beyond words. Then, most of all, I was spared the sight of Jesus and hearing His words of greeting to me.

Now, was staying in this sin cursed world with all its pain and suffering worth missing all that? Why should we choose to live in the suburbs of hell rather than in the new Jerusalem? What makes Christians so determined to reside in this sin polluted earth rather than fly away to the holy city of God? If we say we love Jesus more than all else besides, why is it we fight desperately to avoid leaving for His immediate presence as though we were resisting going to hell itself?

Do you not know that angels attend the death scenes of the Lord's beloved? Luke 16:22 reminds us that when the poor beggar Lazarus died angels came to earth to meet him, greet him, and gently carry him from the filth and sorrows of earth into the holiest and joyful place in existence, heaven itself. When our beloved Lord came to die an angel came to Him as He wrestled in prayer in Gethsemane and strengthened

Him for the death He would die, Luke 22:42-44. In Acts 7:55-56, as Stephen was leaving this world, he saw heaven opening before him and the two worlds met as he stepped into Jesus' immediate presence.

Is not this a death worth dying for the believer? Surely we can be excused because—as believers—we long for our consummation, for our coronation day, for our abundant entrance into the most glorious world of all. As one writer so aptly put it—we live in the shadowlands, and those gone before are in the real world. Let us cease being afraid of our defeated enemy—death. All death can do for any Christian is give them so much more of Christ than they have ever imagined in this life. Take today's verse to heart and learn to be homesick for heaven. Only then will you be fit to live in this sinful world.

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