

Resurrection: Our Hope

For Bob Falkner's Memorial Service - April 22, 2017

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Well again on behalf of Becky and the rest of the family, thank you for your deepest sympathies, your kind words, and your prayers. Today, as we gather to celebrate the remarkable life of Bob Falkner, we'll not only look back in memory, but we'll also look forward in eager anticipation. Because of his faith in Jesus, the story of this beloved man of God, husband, father, mentor, and friend to so many does not come to an end here. The Gospel guarantees that death *does not* and *will not* have the last word.

I had the honor and privilege of personally talking with Bob on several different occasions for the last two months of his life. It began when he texted me this short message back in early February. He said:

"Josh, Bob Falkner here, would like to face time with you in the near future, a little talk about eternity and the age to come."

It seemed like a random text. What would a mentor and long-time friend of mine want to know about things I know he knew all about? Well over the next several weeks, we did what the author of Hebrews instructed: we encouraged one another all the more in the faith as the Day of the Lord approaches (**Hebrews 10:25**). As believers in Jesus, we reminded one another of the story of the Gospel - all the way from the curse of death in the Garden (**Genesis 3:15-19**) to the hope of resurrection when Christ returns to restore the heavens and the earth. After each conversation, I was amazed and was often moved to tears at Bob's confidence in everything God promises us through His Word. In our very last conversation just a few days before he breathed his last, with Becky and Truman and Mercy by his side, Bob said these words to me:

"It's such an honor, I can't believe that we get to share moments like this, to marvel at God's goodness."

After a couple of moments of silence, I told him: "Bob, at the end of the last call we had, you said something that will forever be marked in my mind - you said some words with so much confidence - they were: "I know that He is good." I will never forget those words."

What made Bob such a unique man to me was this confidence. It was something I first saw years earlier. It was remarkable that at 70 years old, his whole life behind him, his vigor slowly leaving him, and his body decaying from cancer, he didn't have regret or disappointment because his life was coming to an end. He was breathtakingly assured and optimistic in one thing above anything else - that his God was good, and He would be faithful to raise him to eternal life and immortality on the day Jesus returns to the earth.

And so today, as we remember Bob's life, I want to remind myself and help you remember the central hope that Bob lived and died with. Today, I do not want us to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about Bob and our other loved ones in Christ who are asleep, that we would not grieve as others do who have no hope (**1 Thessalonians 4:13**).

Yet we do grieve.

We lament.

We mourn.

We mourn first because of our sin. We know we've all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (**Romans 3:23**). We understand by the Scriptures that the wages of sin is death (**Romans 6:23**), and surely there is not a righteous man on earth who never sins (**Ecclesiastes 7:20**). There is none righteous, no, not one (**Romans 3:10**).

Today, we groan, man and beast and all creation subjected to futility under God's curse (**Romans 8:20**). The Lord returns man to the dust from which He made us, saying, "Return, O children of man!" (**Psalms 90:3**) The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone. Like a mist, a vapor, our lives vanish away. (**Psalms 90:10**) So this day is not altogether strange to us. Death is a reality that confronts every single one of us in this present evil age.

This curse from God is in fact is His design, His wisdom, His means of shattering our confidence in the flesh, such that we would cry like King David: "O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!" (**Psalms 39:4-5**) And like Moses, "teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom". (**Psalms 90:12**)

We mourn and lament today because Bob was not exempt from this curse. We grieve because God's decree to return to the dust means the loss of a dear husband, father, brother, mentor, and friend. It is good, it is right that we feel this loss deeply. It's God's reminder to us that all is not right in the world. It reminds us that every other hope apart from what God has guaranteed in His word will disappoint us and leave us wanting (**Romans 5:5**). But, as we feel this loss, let us remember that the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit (**Psalms 34:18**). As Jesus exemplified this and wept with Mary and Martha at the death of His dear friend Lazarus, we know that He keeps count of *our* tossings, He puts *our* tears in His bottle (**Psalms 56:8**), and He remembers that we are dust (**Psalms 103:14**). So, though not exempt from the curse, precious still in the sight of the Lord is the death of our beloved Bob (**Psalms 116:15**).

But our true and ultimate comfort does not come from the knowledge that Jesus weeps with us and records our laments in His book. The Lord has not made us drink this cup of mourning in vain, only to put His arm around us and say "I'm so sorry". On that day He wept with Mary and Martha, Jesus also uttered these glorious words. He said:

“Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.”
(John 11:23–26)

For those with this same confidence and faith in Jesus as the promised seed, king, and God of Israel, there is an appointed end to this dreadful curse. Today, we grieve. Today, we mourn. Today, we are afflicted. Today, we may even despair of life itself. But Jesus also said “blessed are those who mourn, for they *will* be comforted” **(Matthew 5:4)**. Therefore, through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel **(2 Timothy 1:10)**, we do not grieve as ones without hope **(1 Thessalonians 4:13)**.

Since we have the same spirit of faith as the Psalmist and the apostles of Jesus, we believe and speak boldly, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise Bob also **(2 Corinthians 4:13-14)**. We watch and we pray for the sounding of the trumpet **(1 Thessalonians 4:16)**, when the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye **(1 Corinthians 15:51-52)**. Because on the day when Jesus returns, when the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, *then* shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” **(1 Corinthians 15:53-55)**

Because of this great hope of resurrection, we must not lose heart **(2 Corinthians 4:16)**. Though our outer self is wasting away and we will all ultimately end up like Bob unless Jesus returns first, our inner man, our heart, our faith and confidence, is being renewed day by day. The afflictions we endure in this age are only light and momentary, and are preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. This is why we look *not* to the things of this age as our hope and reward, but to the things that we don’t yet see **(2 Corinthians 4:17-18)**. We await Jesus’ coming when death, sorrow, pain, and cancer are no more, and when God will wipe away every tear from our eyes **(Revelation 21:4)**. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep **(1 Thessalonians 4:14)**. When He comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed **(2 Thessalonians 1:10)**, we will see Bob again and marvel and look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living **(Psalm 116:9)**.

I am confident that on that day, Bob will say to me once again:

“It’s such an honor, I can’t believe that we get to share moments like this, to marvel at God’s goodness.”

This time, he’ll say it in a glorified body on a resurrected, restored earth, with the crucified and resurrected King Jesus reigning from Jerusalem in righteousness.

Brothers and sisters, resurrection, life forevermore, and immortality is the hope held out in the Gospel. May we heed the instruction of Paul when he writes to the Thessalonians regarding their loved ones who had died, when he said “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise... Therefore, comfort one another with these words.” **(1 Thessalonians 4:16,18)** Let us remember that God has given His Holy Spirit as the guarantee of this glorious future on this very earth for those who repent and believe **(Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:5)**. The sufferings and pain of this present age are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us in the age to come **(Romans 8:18)**.

But that day is not today. Until that great day dawns and the morning star rises **(2 Peter 1:19)**, we wait with eagerness and patience **(Romans 8:25)**. We let patience have its work, that we may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing on that day **(James 1:4)**. We await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ **(Philippians 3:20)**, who was declared to be the son of God with power by *His* resurrection from the dead **(Romans 1:4)**. He will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself **(Philippians 3:21)**. Because we see Him and we know His story, we set our hope completely - fully - on the grace that will be revealed to us on that Day **(1 Peter 1:13)**.

Now, I believe one of the greatest ways we can honor Bob’s memory is by imitating his faith and his manner of life **(Hebrews 13:7; Philippians 1:27)**. Bob was a woodworker and painter by trade, and did as the Apostle Paul encouraged the Thessalonians: he aspired to live quietly, minding his own affairs, and working with his hands, not having dependence on anyone **(1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)**. Bob’s greatest impact was on us through his example, his words, his loyalty, and his love. He was not only a hearer of the Word, but was a doer of it **(James 1:23-25)**. He loved his family so well, laying down his life in love for his wife as Christ loved the church **(Ephesians 5:25)**. Bob lived a life full of the fruits of the Holy Spirit **(Galatians 5:22-23)**. We could all share a thousand stories of his work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ **(1 Thessalonians 1:3)**, and we ought to share those stories with one another.

So as we reflect and remember together on the ways that he pointed us to Jesus, let us encourage one another to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, to imitate him as he imitated Jesus, thus storing up treasure for ourselves as a good foundation for the age to come, so that we also may take hold of that which is truly life at the coming of the Lord **(1 Timothy 6:18-19)**.

As he did, let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, by looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith **(Hebrews 12:1-2)**. Bob has finished his race of faith **(2 Timothy 4:7)**, triumphant and victorious, holding full assurance of hope until the end **(Hebrews 6:11)**, and there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the

Lord, the righteous judge, will award him on the day Jesus returns, and not only to him but also to all who have loved Christ's appearing (**2 Timothy 4:8**).

We honor Bob by standing firm (**Philippians 4:1**) in this confidence in the face of persecution, suffering, and death. May we remain steadfast in trials and afflictions, for when we have stood the test, we will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him (**James 1:12**). Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, Adam, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven (**1 Corinthians 15:48-49**), Jesus, the firstborn from the dead (**Revelation 1:5**). This is our future if we continue in the faith as Bob did, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the Gospel as the apostles of Jesus proclaimed it (**Colossians 1:23**). So brothers and sisters, stand fast in this confidence (**Philippians 4:1**), hold firm to this trustworthy word (**Titus 1:9**). Let us look forward to our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (**Titus 2:13**).

The resurrection is the hope Bob lived with and died with. It was his eager expectation and hope that he would not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage, Christ would be honored in his body, whether by his life or by his death (**Philippians 1:20**). As we hold to the hope Bob did, Christ is honored even in his death. For he knew that his Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth. He knew that even after his skin is destroyed, yet in his flesh he would see God (**Job 19:25-27**).

If you are here today and you don't have this hope, this confidence, this blessed assurance, I plead with you to call on the name of the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved (**Romans 10:9-10; Acts 2:21**). Fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell (**Matthew 10:28**). God has fixed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness (**Acts 17:31**), and there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved from the wrath of God (**Acts 4:12**). For on a very real day in the future, God will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury (**Romans 2:6-8**). Today, the Lord is patient, not willing for anyone to perish on that Day, but that we would all come to repentance (**2 Peter 3:9**). The God of Israel came in the likeness of sinful flesh (**Romans 8:3**), He took on our frame, and died the death we deserved. He hung on the cross in our place and for our sins (**1 Corinthians 15:3**). And He rose again on the third day (**1 Corinthians 15:4**), victorious over sin and death, as proof that God will be faithful to everything He's promised in the Scriptures. A day is coming when those who sleep in the dust of the earth like Bob does now shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like Bob has done, will shine like the stars forever and ever (**Daniel 12:2-3**). So I plead with you, call on the Lord Jesus, repent, and believe in the Gospel.

For those of us who do believe, as Bob did, let us call to mind today the steadfast love of the Lord which never ceases (**Lamentations 3:22**). He is our portion, and therefore

we hope in Him (**Psalm 142:5**). For what can man do to us and what can separate us from this love that is as strong as death (**Romans 8:35; Song of Solomon 8:6**)? Because of the sinless life, horrific death, and glorious resurrection of Jesus, the king of Israel, death has lost its power and its sting (**1 Corinthians 15:54-55**). And so let us remember that our mourning will be turned into everlasting joy. All who look to Him will be radiant, and our faces will never be covered with shame (**Psalm 34:5**).

We say with the Psalmist, as Bob so often said: "For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations." (**Psalm 100:5**)

For from Him, to Him, and through Him are all things. To Him and Him alone be the glory, both now and forevermore (**Romans 11:36**). We wait with eagerness and patience, and we say "Come, Lord Jesus" (**Revelation 22:20**). May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, may He comfort our hearts and establish them in every good work and word (**2 Thessalonians 2:16-17**). God of Israel, do this for Your glory and for our good. In Jesus' name.

Amen.