

**“Hope in the Midst of Grief”**  
Pastor David Huffstutler  
First Baptist Church, Rockford, IL

## **Introduction**

Consider a report on “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert” from May 11, 2019:

“What do you think happens when we die, Keanu Reeves?” *The Late Show* host asked. And somehow, Keanu managed to come back with a smart, honest reply. He took a deep breath and paused. Then he said, “I know that the ones who love us will miss us.”

OK, wow. Definitely not what ANYONE was expecting to hear, because it's so straightforward and so true, and yet so unexpected.

It's not often that you see Stephen Colbert at a loss for words, but he was speechless after Keanu's reply. A full 10 seconds passed before he said anything at all.

He mouthed “Wow” and shook Keanu's hand. Meanwhile, the audience was also in shock.<sup>1</sup>

Or consider this from Bob Saget, an actor who recently passed away (January 9, 2022), as he spoke of Betty White, an actress who died just days before him (December 31, 2021):

She always said the love of her life was her husband, Allen Ludden, who she lost in 1981. Well, if things work out by Betty's design — in the afterlife, they are reunited. I don't know what happens when we die, but if Betty says you get to be with the love of your life, then I happily defer to Betty on this.<sup>2</sup>

Some people look death and see only grief that remains. Some people guess at an afterlife based on the words of men. But we know better. The truth of God gives hope in the midst of grief.

## **The Loss of Life Brings Grief**

Facing the loss of **one's own life** can be painful. On the night before His death, Jesus sobbed “loud cries and tears” in the garden and “offered up prayers and supplications... to Him who was able to save Him from death” (Heb 5:7; cf. Matt 26:36–46).

Losing a **loved one** brings grief as well. We experience someone's presence and love and then can only cherish the memories of what was. Sometimes the mere news of someone's passing can be too much to bear. When the sinful Phinehas died and the ark of the covenant was captured, upon hearing the news, his father Eli fell over, broke his neck, and died. When the pregnant widow of Phinehas heard all of the above, she went early into labor and died along the way (1 Sam 4:12–22).

---

<sup>1</sup> Kim Wong-Shing, “Keanu Reeves Explains What Happens When We Die and The Answer Is Simple Yet Profound.” January 18, 2022. Online: <https://littlethings.com/entertainment/keanu-reeves-what-happens-when-we-die/4164947-11>. Accessed January 20, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Greg Laurie, “Bob Saget, Norm Macdonald, Betty White and the Afterlife.” January 17, 2022. Online: <https://www.christianpost.com/voices/bob-saget-norm-macdonald-betty-white-and-the-afterlife.html>

Jesus once said, “When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world” (John 16:21). But the widow of Phinehas had sorrow upon sorrow and never found that joy. In her dying moments, she named her newborn son Ichabod, meaning “The glory has departed” (1 Sam 4:21).

Just as this poor woman’s earthly glories suddenly vanished and left her unable to “answer or pay attention” and even see the joy of a newborn child (1 Sam 4:20), sometimes we, too, feel stunned into silence by a loss. Joy for now is gone. What gives us hope in these times?

### **We Can Find Hope Even in the Grief of Losing Life**

What gave Jesus hope as He faced death? What gives us hope as we all face the same? What gives us hope when others pass on and leave us behind?

As we saw, **Jesus** hoped in “Him who was able to save Him from death” (Heb 5:7). His hope was in His resurrection and the joy to come thereafter (cf. Heb 12:2). His cries and tears and grief **found hope in God above**.

Likewise, knowing that Jesus was raised, **we also hope in resurrection** (1 Cor 15:19–22). And before that (if it be before Christ comes again), our hope is this—to be absent from the body is **to be present with the Lord**, something better than earth, something unspeakably good (2 Cor 5:8; 12:1–4; Phil 1:21–23).

But as “there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15), we must find ourselves just by faith in Christ alone (Rom 1:17; 3:28). This faith means believing in Christ as the One who died for our sins, the One whose righteousness is to us, and the One who is coming again to judge us one day. Otherwise, without this faith, being called from the dead will be only to return to death again (Rev 20:11–15). That is no hope at all.

And finally, for **our loved ones**, if they knew Christ, they are “with Him” right now (1 Thess 4:14), and Christ will reunite us with them as we join Him in the air—encouraging words to hear (1 Thess 4:13–18). If they did not know Him, we weep with hope only for ourselves, knowing at least that God is sovereign, kind, and wise and stoops to wipe our tears one day (Rev 21:4).

While in prison, these truths gave hope to the apostle Paul. He could lose all things, but if he knew Christ and His righteousness, he could press on to the resurrection to come (Phil 3:7–14).

### **Conclusion**

Is your grief from losing a job, possessions, a friend, a loved one, your health, or something else? When Christ comes again, He will make all things new. We will be made new, and we will join those in Christ we have lost. And whatever tears remain, they will be wiped away. This is hope.

Know Christ and what He has done for you. Your hope will shine light into the darkness of your grief, and one day God in all His light will dispel your grief once and for all.