

The Eulogy of Pamela Phillips
(May 11, 1944–May 02, 2010)

Thursday, 20 May 2010

Clayton Funeral Home
5530 West Broadway
Pearland, Texas

We have gathered together today to celebrate the transfer of Pam Phillips's soul and spirit from time into eternity.

I use the word "celebrate" because this is the attitude that Pam would wish for us to have. Make no mistake; this is indeed a time of sorrow. But sorrow is a human emotion that is natural for those who are left behind by a loved one's departure to be with the Lord. It is the result of a sudden realization that there can never again be a time for earthly fellowship, companionship, or rapport.

Yet, although sorrow and grief are normal and legitimate emotions, they do not overwhelm those who have placed their trust in Christ. Stronger than these emotions is the clear testimony of biblical truth that applies to Pam's death and these principles provide for her family and friends a source of great joy and thanksgiving. Just the remembrance of Pam's laugh can perk up your day.

Pam Phillips was a ray of sunshine. She lit up every room she entered with an impromptu comedy routine that flowed non-stop. If laughter is the best medicine, she dispensed free prescriptions to any who had the fortunate experience to be in earshot. I first met her right after moving to Houston in 1977. Our weird senses of humor created a bond that lasted until her passing earlier this month.

One of my favorite Pam stories occurred in Berachah Church. We had worked for what seemed like a year on the Prep School's original puppet show. It was entitled *Elijah* and for some reason they cast my voice to portray that of the prophet's. Since I am from extreme South Alabama it turned out that Elijah had a southern drawl which became the source of jokes from emigrants who had moved to Houston from the Union. Pam came to my defense by pointing out that Elijah spent most of his time in the Negev which is extreme South Israel.

When the premiere performance was over, it got rave reviews. A few who were in the cast retired to the Prep School's offices which are located upstairs behind the auditorium of Berachah Church. Somehow a bottle of red wine found its way into the room. I really have no idea who the evening's sommelier happened to be but we concluded that it was only right to pop that cork and toast the successful opening of *Elijah*.

The Scripture proclaims that "wine makes glad the heart of man" and when hearts, already glad, were additionally gladdened, bons mots flew in rapid order followed by boisterous laughter. This continued until around midnight we decided it was time to call a halt and head home.

The door assigned for our exit was the one directly outside the Colonel Thieme's office. We were still laughing as we approached the door when we suddenly realized the Colonel's office door was open and the lights were on. When we got even with the door we were greeted by none other than the Colonel himself. There we stood in shock, certain he could smell wine on our breaths, and looking like the cats that just ate a covey of canaries.

He greeted us with his usual genteel courtesies and bid us a good evening. We were not buying it. We were certain we would be contacted the next day by some duly appointed board member to inform us we had been excommunicated.

Not so. The Colonel was a very wise man. There was no need for rebuke. He recognized our jubilation as warranted following an acclaimed presentation of a vehicle that would successfully communicate important doctrines to children of Prep School age.

Nothing was ever said to us about the incident. However, from then on we did our celebrating at my house where we defined our get-togethers as Breakthroughs. This was a term used at that time by budding theologians who much too often got the notion they had stumbled across doctrines that had never crossed the mind of anyone but them and they were eager to share it with any poor soul who'd give a listen.

Conversely, our sessions did not plumb the mysteries of deep theological questions but rather functioned as a time to unwind from the exigencies of the day. All who gathered faced intense personal challenges at that time and to be able to talk about them humorously through the prism of a biblical worldview led to riotous laughter. It was all in fun and much fun was had. We concluded on one evening that we must have had a Breakthrough and agreed that ours were more in touch with reality than those of the theological wannabes.

A great lesson was learned from our impromptu Breakthroughs: humility permits a person under pressure to laugh at his circumstances. A sense of humor prevents a person from taking himself too seriously. People today speak of stress as if the troubles they face are of greater gravity than those faced by anyone else. This is not stress. It's life. Life is punctuated by an ongoing sequence of circumstances that test the believer's ability to orient and adjust to biblical problem-solving devices. Just because what you face is not on your Day-Timer does not mean it was not in God's divine decree.

Stress is described as bodily or mental tension resulting from factors that alter one's status quo. A test is a circumstance that challenges the believer's inventory of ideas to prove whether or not it is capable of handling it.

This concept is the subject of 1 Peter 1:6-7. In this passage, Peter recognizes that although believers are citizens of a heavenly community they remain in the world but not part of it.

Yet although focused on the perfect environment and phenomenal blessings of the one's eternal future, the believer is faced with challenges, trials, and testings that are common to the fallen environment of this world.

The only way to properly and successfully manage this dichotomy is to view one's earthly difficulties with a relaxed mental attitude. Peter describes this by first referencing the inner happiness that the believer possesses by his knowledge of the eternal future but then contrasts that with the stresses common to life on this earth:

1 Peter 1:6 - In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

1 Peter 1:7 - so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In verse six we find the phrase "distressed by various trials." The word "distressed" is *λυπέω* (*lupeō*) which refers to the stress that occurs in one's soul as a result of outside adversities. These are events that interrupt one's day, his plans, his objectives, and often result in the alteration of his attitude. Adversity takes on many forms, for example, loss of income, loss of health, loss of a loved one; being victimized by unfairness, encountering unexpected responsibilities and obligations that cannot be avoided, or simply the interruption of routine.

Those who face these kinds of trials often become angry and even bitter because of the intrusion of these unwanted and uninvited obstacles. This is the origin of stress.

Adversities in life are inevitable while stress is optional. Verse 7 informs us that these trials have a purpose: “so that the proof of your faith.” The word *proof* is δοκίμιον (*dokimion*) and is best translated “genuineness”: The “genuineness of your faith.”

The word *faith* is the noun πίστις (*pistis*). Its verb form is πιστεύω (*pisteuō*) which is always translated “believe.” The trials of this life are designed to test what you really believe.

If you do not have a high inventory of biblical principles and doctrines in your soul then what you allegedly believe can be easily altered by the “stress of various trials.” Without an unalterable belief in one’s eternal destiny, these trials, or adversities, will produce stress in the soul.

However, for a believer such as Pam, who had grown in grace and absorbed the principles, doctrines, and guidance revealed by her serious study of the Word of God, these trials proved the genuineness of her faith. Verse seven concludes by noting that the person who courageously confronts the exigencies of life by application of biblical truth to them brings glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

I assert that Pam Phillips faced challenges that few of you can imagine. The most grievous was a condition that resulted in the calcification of cysts in her lungs, robbing her of the ability to breathe without the assistance of Fred, her ever-present oxygen tank that strolled along beside her.

Pam never gave up. She, and Fred, continued to work at a fulltime job, a job she thoroughly enjoyed. She consulted those who were clients of the financial planning organization for which she worked. Her personality, her genuine concern for these people, and her work ethic were motivated from her soul’s orientation to and performance of her Christian duties.

Yet as time moved onward her abilities became more and more challenged. Houston’s weather cycles had increasing negative impact on her breathing and stamina. A prolonged illness sapped her energy but she fought back, going through arduous sessions of rehab in order to resume her job and her life. These were interpreted by her as part of the plan that God had decreed for her. She was not to quit but to press on. And this she did with great fortitude while never pausing once to say, “Poor me.” In numerous conversations with her it was clear that she accepted these exigencies as trials that God permitted her to face and resolve with her large inventory of problem-solving devices resident in her soul.

Pam would call me and my wife about once every month or so. We’d talk for over an hour. We would laugh uproariously throughout. She’d tell of the trials presently confronting her and do so with her often self-deprecating sense of humor. Nothing got her down. She would cite the belief that God had a purpose for everything that happened to her. She was grateful for the doctrine she had learned and the privilege of applying these principles to these adversities, all for the glory of God.

During her long battle with pulmonary illness, Pam never complained. In our conversations she would relate the difficulties she faced but her emphasis was never on any particular adversity but rather on the grace, love, and benevolence of God who provided her every need. She rejoiced at the power of the biblical problem-solving devices that were successful in managing adversities and the doctrine in her soul that prevented stress from gaining a foothold.

In the end, the body succumbed to pressures that her soul successfully defied.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 - The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Her legacy is clearly a testimony to the principle of grace under pressure in the crucible of intense physical challenges. Pam never gave up, she never wavered, and she never quit. The power that energized her spiritual life is a courtroom testimony to the validity of doctrine in the soul as the believer’s frontline defense against any adversity that the devil’s world can muster.

Pam is a prime example of what the apostle John refers to in the escrow paragraphs of Revelation 2 and 3 where he writes, *Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω* (*Tōi nikōnti dōsō*), “To the winner I will give ...”

What Pam will receive at the evaluation tribunal of Christ are blessings that stagger the imagination and are summed up by the apostle Peter in:

1 Peter 1:3 - Inherently worthy of praise is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy has caused us to be born again, through an ongoing confidence in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

v. 4 - has secured for us an inheritance which is nonperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, permanently reserved in heaven for you,

v. 5 - who are protected on this earth by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 1:6 - In which you keep on celebrating although for a little while at the present time, if it is necessary, you receive the stress of various adversities,

v. 7 - so that the genuineness of your faith is of much greater value than gold which is perishable. Though your trials receive testing through fire, they might be found to result in commendation, honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ;

v. 8 - Who not having seen, you keep on loving, and at present you see Him not, yet you continuously keep on believing in Him, you keep on rejoicing with a superabundance of happiness inexpressible and clothed with glory.

Pam is now the happy beneficiary of the grace of God. Her soul and spirit are now absent from the body and face-to-face with the Lord. She now breaths normally without the aid of Fred. She has conquered her weight problem. She is in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ who saved her soul and gave her eternal life.

There is really nothing more that needs to be said about Pam. It is now time for Pam to have something to say to you. Several years ago she asked if I would come to Houston to deliver her eulogy which I, quite obviously, agreed to do. Her instructions to me were brief and to the point: “Tell those assembled about the marvelous life I have been privileged to enjoy because of His magnificent gift of salvation and the gracious provision of His Word that has so unfailingly sustained me.”

Here then is her message to you:

It is through Bible study that Pam acquired her treasure trove of divine viewpoint toward life and circumstances. But no one can accumulate this treasure unless he is saved. No one is saved unless he believes in Christ.

It is from this foundation that a person's life may be permanently changed. It is from this faith response that one may begin to refocus his attention away from the details of this life over to the divine guidance provided by the Word of God.

The New Testament speaks of placing one's faith in Christ. But Christ is a title, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah. The titles Messiah-Christ define an individual that is both undiminished deity and true humanity in one Person. Jesus possesses absolute sinless perfection in both His deity and His humanity.

However, every other member of the human race is imperfect and therefore cannot offer to a perfect God any justification why he should be allowed to enter into His heaven.

Helpless to do anything about the problem, God provided a solution through His uniquely-born Son. Jesus' perfection qualified Him to be our substitute on the cross where the sins of the entire human race were transferred to Him and judged. We know that His sacrifice was judged sufficient because after three days He was resurrected from the dead.

I could tell you any number of things about Jesus. But the basic principle is this: God is perfect and cannot have a relationship with anything that is imperfect. We are not perfect, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Jesus is humanity's perfect substitute that enables anyone to acquire perfection by simple faith in Him. When any person believes that his imperfection is erased by Jesus' sacrifice then God imputes to that person His righteousness and eternal life. So, here's the question: "Do you believe this?"

Well, let me give you an example: When Paul and Silas crossed the Dardanelles in Acts 16 it introduced Europe and the West to Christianity. Their first stop was the Roman colony of Philippi where their preaching in the public square landed them in jail. Undaunted, these two men began evangelizing their fellow inmates when an earthquake hit the area causing the prison's doors to fling wide open. But no one tried to escape because they were riveted to the men's message. Having overheard the testimonies of Paul and Silas, the jailer asked them what he must do to be saved.

Now get this: it was Paul and Silas's responsibility to give this man the correct answer, to tell it all and not leave anything out. Here's what they told him in:

Acts 16:31 - Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved ...

That's all they said to him regarding what he needed to do, because all that is required is faith alone in Christ alone.

When the Lord spoke to Nicodemus in John 3 he presented him with a choice that, if made, would have a purpose and a result. There is an important word in John 3:16, a small, simple word pronounced *hē'-nā*. It is generally translated into the English by the word "that." In this verse it introduces both purpose and result. Let's take a look at the verse:

John 3:16 - "God loved the world so much He gave [this is grace, no gift can be a gift that requires something on the part of the recipient] His uniquely-born Son, so that [ἵνα, *hina*: introduces both purpose and result] whoever believes in Him [this is the necessary condition to achieve the purpose and the result] shall not perish [purpose of believing: Nicodemus would be delivered from the lake of fire when he dies] but have eternal life [result of believing: Nicodemus would be imputed eternal life and would go to heaven when he dies].

What qualification does the Lord Himself stipulate for the acquisition of eternal life? Anyone who believes in Him! The word "believe" is the Greek verb πιστεύω. The noun form is πίστις, and is translated "faith." The verb is transitive which places the merit of one's belief on the object. The object is Jesus Christ. Belief in the Person and work of Christ results in salvation and the reception of eternal life.

We know that Nicodemus came to believe in Christ because John 19:39 informs us that he assisted Joseph of Arimathea in preparing the body of Christ for burial after Pilate had released it to them.

Therefore, we may immediately begin to pull some biblical principles together so that we can form a rationale and draw a conclusion.

First of all, John 3:16 tells the unbeliever how to be saved. That's the *purpose* of believing in Christ. Salvation is deliverance from the lake of fire.

Secondly, this verse tells the unbeliever the *result* of believing in Christ. Eternal life is imputed at the moment one believes in Christ but doesn't become operational until physical death. Nicodemus believed in Christ. So did Pam. So have many of you. And so may any of you who are here today without Christ, without hope, and without eternal life. When you know you possess eternal life it provides confidence to face life and circumstances and to do so with great courage. When you live under the power of this truth it changes your life.

Absolute confidence in the fact you have eternal life and that you will be transferred out of this life into the presence of God and Christ when you die gives you courage to do your duty for the Lord right up until the moment you exit the Death-Shadowed Valley. And that is the life Pam Phillips lived.

In case any of you have not understood the simplicity of salvation then here is a concise statement of the gospel:

"Jesus of Nazareth, Who is both perfect God and sinless Man, was sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the human race after which He died, was buried, and three days later was resurrected from the dead. The purpose of these things is so that anyone who believes them will be delivered from retribution in the lake of fire when he dies. The result of these things is that anyone who believes them has eternal life and will go to heaven when he dies." Do you believe this?

If you do, then you have all the assets necessary to grow in grace and achieve the level of spiritual maturity that Pam enjoyed and utilized.

This verse introduces a second principle: You will never be happy in this world until you understand this world cannot make you happy. Only God can do this and he does it through His Word which you must appropriate into your souls.

A great tragedy has occurred within our nation. The simplicity of attaining salvation and eternal life has become complicated. The Bible clearly teaches that there are three phases to the plan of God: (1) salvation, (2) the Christian way of life, and (3) heaven.

The historical downtrend that affects our nation today can be attributed to the sad fact that theologians have inverted the first two of these phases. There is the false doctrine that claims how one lives his life determines whether or not he will be saved and go to heaven when he dies. This asserts that eternal salvation is dependent upon human good, human works, human energy, and human input.

This is a lie right out of the heart of hell. Salvation is based on the work of Christ on the cross. Salvation occurs when you simply believe that Jesus Christ was judged in your place for your sins.

The lie that salvation is based on good works causes many to spend a lifetime trying to be good but sadly learn the moment after death they were not good enough. The reason? They placed their faith in their own good works. The Bible tells us that our faith must be placed in the work of Christ for salvation.

Ephesians 2:8 - By grace you have been saved through faith, and this salvation is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

v. 9 - not as a result of works, so that no one should boast.

Galatians 2:16 - A man is not justified by the works of the Law but rather through faith in Christ Jesus. We have believed in Christ Jesus, in order that we may be justified by faith in Christ, not by works of the Law. By the works of the Law shall no individual be justified.

Acts 16:31 - Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved.

Consequently, when any person believes in Christ at that moment his soul is saved, he is imputed eternal life, and he enters into phase two, the spiritual life of the believer in time. No one can live the Christian way of life unless he is a Christian. No one can be a Christian unless he believes in Christ.

Salvation thus occurs at a moment of time through faith alone in Christ alone. One second later the believer begins his spiritual life. How you live it depends upon whether you will devote yourself to learning, understanding, and applying biblical principles to your life.

Pam understood clearly the importance of learning and applying the Word of God. It is one thing to study the Bible; it is another to truly believe its message. And the most difficult is to apply that message to the circumstances of life. Failure to do so causes stress and the inevitable dependence on human-viewpoint problem-solving devices.

Pam advanced to a point where she was able to live life to the fullest. Through spiritual growth she came to the realization that it is far better to learn and live rather than live and learn.

Some Christians devote no time at all to studying the Bible and thus never apply these principles to their lives. They have no tranquility of soul, they have no clarity of thought, therefore, they lead unhappy lives, and they fear death.

Pam was not among this ilk. She was an invisible hero with regard to the unseen battles that rage in the Invisible War. Her historical impact upon this spiritual combat cannot be measured. Her consistent application of truth however has been observed by many. She took the message of God's wonderful plan to all who would give her a hearing. She applied the principles of the Word of God to her life and by doing so inspired others. Although her death was the result of an ongoing battle with an ever diminishing capacity to breathe, this caused her no fear. For her as with Paul dying was profit.

There are some of you here today that have a fear of death. I don't know who you are but nevertheless, I know you are here. The writer of Hebrews describes your condition and its solution in:

Hebrews 2:14 - Since mankind shares in blood and flesh, Jesus Himself also partook of the same blood and flesh in order that through His spiritual death on the cross He might render powerless the one who has the power of physical death, that is, the devil;

v. 15 - in order that He might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

In other words, "Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven but Nobody Wants to Die" was written for such people. But fear of death can be conquered by acceptance of the reality that the soul never dies. It is where the soul spends eternity that becomes the salient question. For believers, eternity is spent in the presence of God and Christ.

Pam's knowledge of the Word of God gave her a relaxed mental attitude toward both death and life. Consequently, she enjoyed life. She was truly a happy, jovial, and witty person. True happiness is not an emotion but an inner resource that is not dependent upon circumstances of life but rather finds its source in complete orientation to the plan of God. Knowing that you are in God's perfect care and that every aspect of your life is known to Him provides a peace that passes all understanding. This enabled Pam to enjoy true happiness.

This super-abundance of happiness enabled her to live her life in the light of eternity. She took life one day at a time and lived it to the maximum. Not fearing death enabled her to enjoy living. This kind of happiness depends upon a source of power that does not vary, but is absolute and immutable.

Pam is now in the queue to receive the fulfillment of this promise given by Jesus to those who believe in Him:



John 14:1 - "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

v. 2 - "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

v. 3 - "And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am there you may be also."

Sharing the life of God is necessary in order to live eternally with God and Pam's faith in Christ resulted in her having eternal life:

1 John 5:11 - God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son.

v. 13 - These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.

Pam not only knew all these things she believed these things. As a result she had tranquility of soul and possessed true happiness.

In closing, a few brief comments to Pam's family:

To her children: Cody and Kendall:

God's grace blessed you with a mother who exhibited courage, tenacity, and endurance under circumstances that were often difficult and trying. However, through it all she never lost hope, she maintained a positive approach toward the exigencies she faced, and in the end she emerged as the ultimate victor. She provided each of you with physical life. She cared for you, trained you, loved you. She demonstrated all the principles of good citizenship and good character.

The power that sustained her was the presence of the Word of God in her soul which she learned and applied under the mentorship of the Holy Spirit. Her courage and her happiness were the direct result of her commitment to biblical truth and submission to its mandates. She allowed Jesus Christ to be her guidon and she followed His example until He called her home for all eternity.

Consequently, she urges you to follow her example: pursue truth, allow it to guide your decision making, your problem-solving, and your daily walk.

Your mother left a legacy. That legacy is a lifestyle based on truth and honor which will garrison your souls in this time of personal sorrow. Keep your eyes upon Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. Let your souls be comforted by having confidence in the promised future reunion.

To her grandchildren, Avery and Tyler Sanderlin and Harris and Alice Thomas:

You had a wonderful grandmother. Whammy was a wonderful lady and one who showed great confidence and courage as she accepted her appointment with the Lord with great anticipation and with poise and grace. She is now in heaven in the presence of the Father and her Savior, Jesus Christ.

Although you already miss her, you may comfort your souls with the knowledge that she is now in a place where:

Revelation 21:4b - ... there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; for the old order of things has passed away.

To her family and friends:



May the sorrow you now experience due to her absence be soon exchanged for the joyous expectation of the promised future reunion. May the grace of God and the power of His Word sustain you during the interim.

1 Corinthians 13:12a -
then face to face.

Now we see in a mirror darkly, but

As we salute Pam here, she is presently enjoying superabundance of happiness as a star student in the Divine Academy of Grace Didactics where, under the tutelage of its Chancellor in Chief, her Lord Jesus Christ, she is having a series of legitimate Breakthroughs.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father, we come to your throne of grace today, saddened by the death of a mother, grandmother, and friend. Yet we have learned from Your Word that such sorrow is only experienced by those who are left behind. And so we are encouraged by the knowledge that You rejoice in the death of Your saints and that Pam is happily in Your presence.

Thus, it is our prayer that Your grace will comfort those who now find themselves missing her. Shower upon them Your gracious mercies which will bring tranquility to their troubled souls.

Such tranquility springs from biblical principles which sustain, give strength, and provide the ability to endure. May the Holy Spirit empower each one to draw from this reservoir of confidence, enabling each to keep his eyes focused on the Source of all good and perfect gifts, our Lord Jesus Christ. Pam was indeed a good gift, now made perfect in Him.

We also pray that Your grace will mollify their grief while amplifying their curiosity to search the Scripture for the source of tranquility that sustained Pam's trip through the Death-Shadowed Valley.

There is no substitute for victory. There can be no victory without Christ, a victory that was won through His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross and made available to all through faith alone in Him.

Pam, Your child, is victorious. On May 2, 2010, You called her to enter into the realm of Your eternal glory about which we are confident and for which we are grateful.

And we lift our prayer in the name of Your uniquely-born Son, namely, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

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