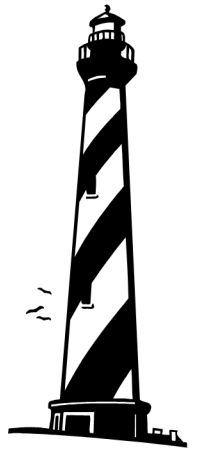




THE BEACON BEAM

April 2026

LIFE GIVING/LIFE SUSTAINING TRUTH



Grief: Finding Hope in the Darkness

by Paul David Tripp

No matter how unexpected or predictable, death shakes us to the core. The pain is inescapable.

What You Need to Know

Nothing is more shocking, emotional, or final than the death of a loved one. Facing the death of someone you love—a child, a spouse, a parent, a close friend—is one of life's most difficult experiences.

Your head is spinning with so many thoughts, feelings, and emotions. You can't grasp that you've had your last visit, your last conversation, your last meal, and your last holiday with your loved one. Your mind is flooded with things you wish you had said or done. You want to say, "I love you," one more time, and you want to hear it said to you.

Your warehouse of memories is

filled with fond and painful memories, and you are holding tightly to that treasured collection of fading photographs. You don't feel ready to say goodbye or to deal with the grief that's overtaken you.

This article is written to help you make sense out of what appears to make no sense and to point you towards hope even as you are experiencing the darkness of death.

When you are dealing with grief your emotions race and your thoughts are scattered. In the middle of this confusing and hard time, you need to remember a few simple truths from the Bible. God will use them to help you understand what you are experiencing and to give you hooks on which to hang your emotions.

You can't prepare for the death of a loved one. Whether death results from a sudden accident or a long ill-

ness, it always catches us unprepared. Death is so deeply emotional and stunningly final that there is nothing you can do ahead of time that will help you sail through your moment of loss. Those who knew that death was coming and those who were taken completely by surprise will go through many of the same things.

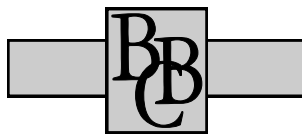
The Bible includes many poignant stories that mirror our experience. The story of the death of David's son, Absalom, gives us a picture of a grieving parent.

Absalom plotted to take David's place as king of Israel. When his rebellion was crushed, he was killed, even though David had ordered his soldiers to take him alive. David knew that Absalom's actions might lead to his death, but that didn't lessen his grief. 2 Samuel 18:33 (ESV)

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Michael R. Karns, *Minister of Christian Education*
Robert F. LaTour, *Minister of Pastoral Care*
Gregory L. Phillips, *Minister of Music*
N. Hunter Strength, *Minister of Youth*

Sunday

Morning Worship...9:30 AM
Sunday School.....11:10 AM
Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

Wednesday

Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM
IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM
Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

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tells us, "And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

David's cry is the cry of every grieving parent. No matter how unexpected or predictable, death shakes us to the core. The pain is inescapable. Don't feel guilty or embarrassed if you feel unprepared to face it. There's no way to be ready for what you are going through.

Death was not part of God's original plan. One reason death is so hard to accept and understand is that it's completely out of step with the life God planned for this world. The apostle Paul calls death our "enemy" (1 Corinthians 15:25-26). Death is the enemy of everything good and beautiful about life.

Death should make you morally sad and righteously angry. Death reminds us that we live in a world that is terribly broken; it's not functioning according to God's original design, where life was meant to give way to life, on into eternity. It's biblical to treat death as sad and unnatural.

God encourages you to mourn. Death was never meant to be. When you recognize this, you will hunger for a final restoration of all things. You will long to live in a place where the last enemy—death—has been defeated.

You are never alone in the darkness. Death is one of the loneliest experiences of human existence. The circumstances you are dealing with are individual and unique. It's normal to feel as if no one has been through what you're experiencing. It's normal to feel all alone, even when you are surrounded with people.

But the death of a loved one is a universal experience, and a company of mourners surrounds you. Yet there is an even more powerful way in which you are not alone. Your Savior, Jesus, has taken another

“God can and does bring wonderful things out of the darkest moments of our lives. Your Lord is present with you in this darkness. He has planned that even the darkest of things would result in redemptive good for His children.”

name, Emmanuel, or "God with us." This name reminds you that, as you came to Christ, you literally became the place where God dwells.

You have a powerful Brother, Savior, Counselor, and Friend who not only stands beside you, but lives within you! His presence makes it impossible for you to be alone in this moment of pain (John 14:15-20).

Good can come out of the very worst of things. Is death a bad thing? Yes. But the Bible tells us that the brightest of good things can be found in the midst of evil's darkness.

The death of Jesus Christ is a powerful demonstration of this truth. On the hill of death outside the city, the best thing that ever happened came from the worst thing ever. What could be worse than the killing of the Messiah? What could be more unjust than the illegal execution of the one perfect person who ever lived? In the sermon he preached on the day of Pentecost, Peter said that Jesus' death was an evil thing done by evil men to the one truly good person in the whole world (Acts 2:22-36).

But this terrible moment was under God's control. God planned that this ultimate evil would accomplish ultimate good. In this dark moment, as Jesus died on the cross, God defeated sin and death—two enemies

we could not defeat on our own.

In the same way, God can and does bring wonderful things out of the darkest moments of our lives. Your Lord is present with you in this darkness. He has planned that even the darkest of things would result in redemptive good for His children. He surrendered His Son to death so you could have life. He will not abandon you now.

One day death will be put to death. The death of a loved one should remind you that God's work is not yet complete. Because of sin, death entered the world. When sin is completely defeated, death will also be defeated. The apostle Paul talks about Christ's present ministry this way: "For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

Jesus died so we would no longer have to die. When He rose from the dead, death was defeated. Until Jesus returns, we still experience death, but one day life will not give way to death. Children will not mourn their parents. Parents will not mourn their children. There will be no widows or grieving friends. Yes, death is an enemy, but this enemy will die. The present reign of Christ guarantees this. One day life will give way to life for eternity.

As you weep, remember that the One who weeps with you understands your heartache. He is "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). But He does more than understand; He also acts. Jesus will not let death reign forever. On the cross He defeated death, and His resurrection is your guarantee that one day, all who believe in Him, will be resurrected to a life of glory and peace. One day He is coming again to end physical death and to usher in a new heaven and earth where there will be no dying, no tears, and no sorrow (Revelation 21:1-4).

ZIMBABWE REPORT

by Greg Barkman

Last month I told you about my upcoming trip to Zimbabwe and why it was important. Now that I have returned, I would like to tell you some of what I experienced.

THE JOURNEY. Getting to Zimbabwe is not easy. The journey begins by boarding a plane to Atlanta and a connecting flight to Johannesburg, South Africa, before taking a third flight to Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The flight from Atlanta to Johannesburg is fifteen hours. Leaving Atlanta around 10:00 pm you might expect to land in South Africa around 1:00 pm the next day. However, because we cross six time zones it is 7:00 pm local time when we arrive. Welcome to the world of jetlag! There are no flights to Bulawayo at night, so we checked into the Garden Court Hotel near the airport, rolled out early for a buffet breakfast, and hurried back to the airport around 8:00 am to get checked in for a 10:30 flight to Zimbabwe. As so often happens, the flight was delayed by nearly an hour, but we arrived safely around 1:00 pm, made our way through customs, paid our \$30.00 entrance fee, and waited for our ride into the city. I think we went first to the Guest House to settle in before a short trip to LaVerne Waugh's home and supper, fellowship, and then back for a good night's sleep at the Guest House. The Guest House has four bedrooms and four baths, along with a kitchen and living room, set amidst beautiful grounds and outdoor swimming pool. One bedroom has two beds, so it was the perfect place for our group of five. It is meticulously kept, inside and out, by Simon, the grounds keeper and a young mother of three who attends the inside. Both are professing be-



The New Building Reflections Baptist Church

lievers, as is Belinda, the owner.

How does one survive fifteen hours on one flight? That depends on a number of factors such as seat location, size and behavior of those sitting around you, and your ability to sleep in an airplane seat. It's no easy task, but not impossible. Experienced travelers usually know how to manage. With ear plugs, face mask, neck pillow, and an Advil PM tablet, I enjoyed about six hours sleep. People who get no sleep are usually pretty useless for a day or two, but with some decent sleep, it's possible to hit the ground running.

THE TEAM. I was not alone in making this trip. There were four other men from North Carolina, all of whom have been before. Pastor Bob Boyd is an elder at Providence Baptist Church in Asheboro, and has taken

the lead in developing the pastor's training school. He travels to Zimbabwe several times a year, and has done an outstanding job in organizing a three year curriculum. Harry Maples, a deacon at Providence Baptist, holds an MDiv from Southwestern Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and has pastored churches in upstate New York and Worcester, Massachusetts. He concluded that he was not cut out for pastoring, so he moved back home to North Carolina, where he is involved in teaching and evangelism in Hamlet and Asheboro, NC. He is a solid teacher with a booming voice. Van Hersey lives in the town of Wake Forest where he is active in his church and has developed a strong interest in the work in Zimbabwe, having visited several times in recent years. Finally, Jon Zimmerman, a

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member of Bible Baptist Church in Creedmoor, works in Durham city government, and is an excellent cinematographer who enjoys traveling to Zimbabwe to record gospel work on videos. We expect to receive a video of this trip after Jon is able to complete the editing, and we plan to show it to the Beacon congregation.

THE WAUGH'S. Stuart Waugh entered the presence of his Lord more than five years ago. The works he started continue to grow and flourish in his absence, testimony to the carefulness with which he did the Lord's work, and the evidence of God's hand of blessing upon those labors. His wife, LaVerne, continues heavily involved in the work, assisting with legal and technical issues, medical needs, and encouragement. She teaches a class of Teens at Hillside Baptist Church in Bulawayo, pastored by Crispin, and is careful to yield leadership to the Zimbabwe pastors in all her endeavors. I was happy to learn that her health is good with no new medical issues, and her mind remains sharp. Sheonna Waugh Anders, and her husband Terry live near LaVerne with their family of growing boys, carrying on their Safari business, and helping with Gospel work through Bible studies and other avenues. Sarah Kate Waugh Erasmus and her husband Lee have recently welcomed baby Jamie into their family. Their grown son, Aaron Michael, is a capable young man working in the world of finance. The Erasmus's also live near the Waugh compound. Lee works long hours managing one of the many mines in Zimbabwe. LaVerne's sister, Cindy, lives in the Waugh compound along with her grown daughter, Tracy, who works for Terry Anders in his Safari business. She speaks the Shona language as fluently as English, and is a real asset to the Safari business. I observed solid growth and spiritual

development in all the members of the Waugh family. They are committed to Christ and to the spread of the Gospel of Grace in Zimbabwe.

THE PASTORS. It was a joy to reconnect with the Zimbabwe pastors I have taught and fellowshiped with over many years. They all seem to be doing well. Ram, the senior member of this group is now with the Lord, but Collin pastors his church and reports that it is continuing strong. Ram's wife attended the celebration, and it was good to renew fellowship with her after several decades without personal contact. She is doing well

dedication of Reflection's new building. I was not prepared for such a large and well-constructed edifice. The church began more than twenty years ago with four men meeting under a tree on Reflections Farm. Today, two or three hundred attend every Sunday. On this special Sunday, the count was 588 including children, but there were probably two or three hundred from other churches. Reflections Baptist has progressed from meeting under a tree, to a tent, followed by a small building constructed by church members from hand-made-bricks, to the large and beautiful new building capable of



The Brothers, Pastors Juma and Saidi

and urged me to visit their town on my next visit to Zimbabwe. There are several new pastors I had not previously met, and it is good to see God raising up and equipping young men to continue the spread of the gospel.

THE BIG DAY. The primary occasion for this trip was two events at Reflections Baptist Church on Sunday, March 29. The first was the

seating around three hundred. This is an impressive structure undertaken by the church itself, and they are justifiably proud of what the Lord has enabled them to accomplish. I was privileged to preach for the dedication service at 11:00 am, after an excellent Sunday School lesson at 10:00 am taught by Henry Maples. School graduation followed after a short

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break. Twenty-four men crossed the platform to receive diplomas after completing three years of study, the first graduating class for the long awaited Stuart Waugh Pastors Training School. All the seasoned pastors graduated along with several younger men. Chrispin, the valedictorian, along with Saidi, will teach some courses moving forward. The two hour graduation ceremony was on Sunday and Monday, a new class of twenty-three began their three year course of study. We look forward to another graduation in 2029. Most of the men will begin new churches in towns and villages who are asking for someone to come and teach them God's Word.

Finally, the church provided a meal for everyone present. It was well organized and efficiently served.

We started back to Bulawayo around 4:00 pm, traveling over washed out farm roads. It was dark by the time we arrived home after a long and eventful day. It is exciting to see what God is doing in Zimbabwe. I'm so thankful God directed Beacon Baptist to partner with Stuart and LaVerne Waugh more than forty years ago, and I am delighted to have been present for this "Big Day." It was an appropriate celebration of what God has done. All praise to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for divine blessing upon these endeavors.

THE RETURN. The journey home is similar to the journey over except the time zones are reversed. The long flight from Johannesburg to Atlanta took sixteen hours, one hour longer than the outgoing flight due to the difference in the earth's rotation.

Additionally, we arrived six hours earlier instead of six hours later than the time on my watch. Stepping into the beginning of Daylight Saving Time added another hour to the confusion. No wonder my body has had trouble acclimating. When I was younger, it seemed to take about a week to recover. Now it seems to take two or more weeks to adjust fully. It is a rugged trip, taxing mind and body to the limit. Was it worth it? Yes. I thank God for allowing me to witness the evidence of God's work and to renew fellowship with some of God's choicest servants.



"God is pursuing with omnipotent passion a worldwide purpose of gathering joyful worshipers for Himself from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. He has an inexhaustible enthusiasm for the supremacy of His Name among the nations. Therefore, let us bring our affections into line with His, and, for the sake of His name, let us renounce the quest for worldly comforts and join His global purpose."

—John Piper

EPITAPH OF A CHAMPION

(II Timothy 4:1-8)

by Bob LaTour

Shortly before his martyrdom, Paul wrote II Timothy from a Roman dungeon; it was the last of his inspired letters. One cannot help but wonder what was going through his mind as he sat there in chains. To be sure, he thought about the journey that he had traveled. Trained under Gamaliel, the most noted rabbi of his time, Paul became a feared zealot for Judaism. He would later write to the Galatians, “For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.” In the providence of God, Paul was encountered by the risen Christ while enroute to arrest Christians in Damascus. That day, his journey would take a radical turn. From being a fierce persecutor of the church, he would become a bold but persecuted champion of the Christian faith. He proclaimed Christ to his countrymen, debated the Jewish hierarchy and even presented the gospel to skeptical King Herod Agrippa II. Mile-markers dotted his journey as he grew from being Saul, the young, ambitious Pharisee to Paul, the aged, devoted prisoner of Christ—a prisoner whose freedom would come through martyrdom. How did he face what loomed ahead of him? What can we learn from the epitaph of this champion of the faith? How can we profit from his example as we live in a world that is becoming increasingly hostile to biblical Christianity?

Like Paul, our birth and our death, both of which are appointed by God, are bookends to our journey. In Psalm 139:16 David wrote, “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written. The days fashioned for

***Beloved,
when we take an
honest look at
God’s Word,
our desire should
focus on being a
faithful steward in
whatever the task
may be for the glory
of God and the
eternal good of
others.***

me, When as yet there were none of them.” The days fashioned means “pre-ordained” by God.” Paul told the Galatian believers that God had separated him from his mother’s womb. The ESV and NASB state, “God set me apart before I was born.” Following Paul’s encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, Ananias, a disciple of Christ, was told in a vision to visit Paul. “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” The course of Paul’s life was charted in the providence of God. From his birth to his death, he was becoming the man in our text. He wrote to the Philippians, “According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as

always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (2:20-21).

Men like the Apostle Paul seem larger than life to those who admire their notable contributions to Christ’s church. If we’re not careful, we can discount the ministry to which God has called us. We can lose sight of what Jesus taught about the widow’s mite. “Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.” God will reward our service for Him by His evaluation of how we invested the talents, resources and opportunities that He affords us until He takes us home. Beloved, when we take an honest look at God’s Word, our desire should focus on being a faithful *steward in whatever the task may be for the glory of God and the eternal good of others*. No matter what our present age or our God-given role in the church, our passion must focus on *finishing strong*. A word of caution to all: None of us know when death will end our opportunities. A word of challenge to those who may be up in years, to those who are homebound, or those who may have a terminal illness: Make an impact with the time that you have left. The thief on the cross said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” With NINE words, he testified of faith in Christ. The response of Jesus was “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” The words of this thief

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have testified to multiplied thousands that where there is physical life there is opportunity to declare repentant-faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and, in so doing, be a herald of God's grace.

In II Timothy 4:1-5, "Paul has just charged Timothy to stay faithful, endure hardship, and finish his ministry. Now he reveals why the charge is so urgent: Paul's own race is nearly over. Standing in the shadow of death, imprisoned and awaiting execution, he speaks not with fear but with peace, surrender, and worship. He sees his life, not being taken from him, but being poured out as an offering to God." Verses 6-8 contain the triumphant epitaph of Paul which he wrote of himself under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is a brief, potent

summary of a life well-lived. It is the declaration of a champion. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

"W.E. Vine succinctly summarizes Paul's epitaph and draws out an important application for every saint to ponder 'There is no expression of regret about the past, no sighing for what might have been, no 'longing, lingering, look behind.' As a warrior his warfare had been well-waged; as a racer his course had been completed; as a guardian of the faith he had kept his treasure to the end. How goodly an example he set (for) us!"

It is noteworthy that he finished strong because of the testing that he went through and not despite them.

I end with a question for those readers who are entrusting their eternal soul to the safekeeping of Christ: What would you want written as your epitaph when it comes to fighting the good fight, finishing your race and keeping the faith? Paul could face death with confident expectation of receiving the crown of righteousness and because his battle cry was, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Taken from a Sermon:

Epitaph of a Champion

(View on sermonaudio.com under LaTour)



You are invited:

Spring Bible Conference at Beacon—April 5 through April 8

With Mark Webb from Hartville, Wyoming

Theme: "Resurrection"



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CALENDAR

- 01 IMPACT Clubs
- 04 The Forge (Men's Bible Study)
- 05-08 Spring Bible Conference
ESL (English as a Second Language)
- 06 Tri-State Particular Baptist Fellowship
- 07 Coffee n' Courage
- 12 Lord's Table
ESL
- 14 Coffee n' Courage
Elders/Deacons Meeting
- 15 IMPACT Clubs
- 16 Silver Saints
- 18 IMPACT Grand Prix
- 19 Members Meeting
ESL
- 21 Coffee n' Courage
- 22 IMPACT Clubs
- 25 IMPACT Princess Tea Party
- 26 ESL
- 29 IMPACT Clubs

MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 01 Alice Marley
- 02 Kevin Isley
- 04 Bonnie Kooy
Paul Nance
Ann Rose
- 10 Daniel Freeman
Ashley Rogers
- 11 Jamie Hinshaw
- 12 Don Boudreault
- 13 Morris Crabtree
- 14 Pam Atkins
- 16 Mackenzie Lowe
- 17 Emily Lewis
- 18 Dean Via
- 19 Jay Lowe
- 20 Brenda Yelverton
- 21 Gayle Davis
- 23 Daniel Hinshaw
- 24 Judy Caldwell
- 25 Angela Boyd
- 27 Ed Bradshaw
Carl Hinshaw
Rob McDorman
Dallas Sutton, Jr.
- 28 Greg Barkman
Barbara Coble
Joe Moody
- 30 Lori Craig

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- 01 Cathy Payne
- 03 Joshua Jensen
- 09 Simeon Bixby*
- 11 Anna Jensen*
- 26 Andy Gudeman

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Jedediah Lowe
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*We express our heartfelt sympathy
to the families of:*

Gretchen Boswell
Ronnie Faucette
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