

**Text:** Various

**Title:** Little Lights Memorial Service

**Truth:** God cares for every life, including the littlest lights among us.

**Date/Location:** February 18, 2024 at FBC

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## Introduction

For some years now I have had a feeling that we should take some time to remember the little babies who have left this life “too early,” as we say. It has become a tradition that parents keep the matter to themselves—and that is not bad or wrong. Perhaps parents do not know what to do, or feel it would be awkward to say something, or might bring up bad memories for someone else. All this is entirely understandable and often appropriate. Yet at the same time, my feeling has been, it does our souls good to come apart for a little while to seek comfort from Heaven when we face tragedy. Doing so makes a meaningful statement that we care for one another, and that we recognize how precious God’s gift of life really is. Your little child is worthy of every remembrance that we may offer for him. With a name or without, with a grave or without, with a birth certificate or without—God created that little light and knows her and all her days.

Others may have had a remembrance service for their little one, say if he or she passed away some weeks or months into life because of a congenital condition, or SIDS, or some terrible illness that struck too early for the little one to fight it off. It is OK to remember that little one *again*.

We gratefully acknowledge before God that tragedy strikes us in this way far less than it has in centuries past, at least in our part of the world. That means many of us have not experienced the grief of such loss like our ancestors did. Nevertheless, some of us have experienced the loss of precious young life, and are left with a lot of grief, and questions.

Instead of a traditional “homily” or sermon, I want to sit beside you, as if we were enjoying the quiet and comfort of your home, and just talk and answer some questions that you might have.

## **I. Comfort in Death**

How can you find comfort in grief? First, know this: grief is perfectly OK, it is normal. But when it swallows you up you feel unable to go forward, or you isolate yourself, or when you become angry at God, then grief needs to be managed more firmly.

If we trust in God, He can give us comfort directly through His word. For example: Psalm 18:2, 30:

18:2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;  
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;  
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

18:30 As for God, His way is perfect;  
The word of the LORD is proven;  
He is a shield to all who trust in Him.

He can also provide comfort through the presence and encouragement of other people.

He does this not only for our own consolation, but also so that we can help others in their time of need (2

Corinthians 1:3-5). God helps His people at just the right time.

But of course you must entrust yourself to Him. He knows what He is doing and why everything has happened the way it has. He will not necessarily show you why, but part of the “why” is to help you trust in Him, instead of in yourself (2 Cor. 1:9).

App: This is not just abstract theology. It is what happens when you *know God*. He knows you, and you are friends, and His comfort is available to you. You can experience an inexplicable peace in the midst of your sorrow.

## II. Truth about Life

A. Your little one, or the little one you came to remember today for your family or friend, is a true human being. At least God considers them that way, even if some of our friends are unclear about that. God says to Jeremiah later in his life:

Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;  
[And for the prophet Jeremiah, God specifically arranged two other things as well.]

Before you were born I sanctified you;  
I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

God had a personal knowledge of this man prior to his birth. For this one, God had planned out that Jeremiah would be set apart and would have as his life calling to be a prophet, one who preaches God’s message to others.

The Bible further tells us in Psalm 139 that God has made us. However indirectly through the normal means of conception and growth, it is still *God* who is responsible

for our “construction.” He carefully designed the first humans in their biology to make sure that the process would work.

<sup>13</sup> For You formed my inward parts;  
You covered me in my mother’s womb.

<sup>14</sup> I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made;...

<sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from You,  
When I was made in secret,  
*And* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

<sup>16</sup> Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.  
And in Your book they all were written,  
The days fashioned for me,  
When *as yet there were* none of them.

So why does not the process work every time? Because of the intrusion of sin and death into humanity, people generally have departed from God and His sustaining power. This leads to degradation that affects our offspring, as relatively innocent as they are. They are still part of our broken race.

Jesus loves little children. They provide the perfect picture of humble dependence (Luke 18:16) which is what we need to do in our relationship with God—be humble and depend on Him.

When God wrote the laws of government, He provided babies inside their mothers with the same protections that adults had (Exodus 21:22-25). This tells us just how seriously God takes human life and how precious it is to him.

App: You love your little one, even if you did not “meet” that one yet. God loves that child too.

### **III. What about After an Infant Dies?**

I begin by reminding us of the foundational truth that every human being from the very moment of conception is part of our broken human race. What God teaches about this is very plain: All have sinned and fail to measure up to God’s holy expectation for our thought and conduct. The consequences of our conduct is a very steep penalty—“the wages of sin is death.”

Only God’s gracious grant of forgiveness overcomes this penalty. God has wisely chosen to grant His forgiveness to those who have a contrite spirit and trust in Him through Jesus. This is so because Jesus took the death our crimes deserved. All or almost all of us here have the capacity to trust in Jesus this way and receive the free gift of eternal life. This is such an easy requirement that God has made no other provision. He knows that people who refuse that requirement are not truly contrite about their fallen state.

But little babies do not have that capacity. This leaves us in a conundrum. What about their original sin? Must they be baptized to wash sin away? The answer to that question is a resolute NO. The washing of water does not cleanse anyone from sin. The ritual, no matter how you try to construe it, cannot accomplish what the death of Christ accomplished for sinners. Only His work, not any other, can do the job.

Can such go to heaven if they die in infancy? I believe the answer is yes, based on three truths from the Bible:

1. Children are *relatively* innocent. They are not completely innocent, but relatively so, because they have not had works either bad or good for which they can be held accountable. Children are still imputed Adam's sin—that is why they die—and have inherited the sin nature from their parents. But there is a difference between a sinner who has never expressed his sin and one who has.
2. God is extremely compassionate. He cares especially for orphans and widows. He looks out for the oppressed. He saves the lowly. We believe this applies also to children in their weakest, most unable state. And inability does not stop God, for we are all in effect unable to rescue ourselves from our plight!
3. The example of King David with his son who died shortly after birth in 2 Samuel 12:23. David says there that he will not be able to bring the son back to him, but he will go to his son. I believe this refers to the time when David dies, that he will see that son. But if the son were in Hell, and David is bound for Paradise as a believer in God, then he would never see that son again. By implication, it appears that he would see his son in Paradise, or what we today call Heaven.

Application: This is where our hope lies. There are many, many infants who died in infancy. They have eternal spirits, just like you and I do. It is reasonable, though admittedly not universally believed, that God saves infants who die in infancy before they are able to consciously choose for or against God. This is what I have believed, based on the Bible, ever since I looked into the question.

Lest anyone criticize this view by saying that the loss of infant life is the best way to populate heaven, I strongly disagree. It is *a way* in this sin-cursed earth that infants go to heaven, but the best scenario would be for them to live a long life, respond in faith to God, serve God in this life, and then die at a ripe old age. I am not saying this to question God's wisdom, because even God Himself in Isaiah 65:20 speaks about the blessing of longevity in the future kingdom when "a child will die 100 years old" and "no more shall an infant from there live but a few days." It does not happen that way in our era, but it shall in the future.

#### **IV. Hope For Us**

If we believe what God says in the Bible—and we do—those souls who die in infancy and those who first reach the age of accountability and trust in Jesus Christ will be together in heaven. All others will be apart from them in a place called the lake of fire. Either way, our hope for the far future has to rest in God—either for our little lights, or for ourselves.

Again, we believe Scripture about this, for one because we have other more credible source that knows about the matters of life and death and what happens afterward. We have no better source than God who is responsible for the contents of the Bible.

We do not believe the Bible because of blind faith, or because we grew up that way, or because it works for us, or because our family has always been that way (this and next paragraph from a Voddie Baucham message).

Rather, we believe the Bible because it is a reliable collection of historical documents (see Luke 1:1-4, not legend, myth, fairy tales, etc. actual events recorded) written down by eyewitnesses (they saw; 1 John 1:1-2) during the lifetime of other eyewitnesses (1 Cor. 15) who report to us supernatural events that took place in fulfillment of specific prophecy and claim that their writings are divine rather than human in origin.

Among those amazing events was that one Jesus ben Joseph of Nazareth made a credible claim to Messianic authority by healing the sick, casting out demons, and even raising the dead. He had a teaching ministry where he visited many cities telling them of the coming kingdom from Heaven, and how whoever believe in Him would receive the remission of sins. That remission was “created” when He was killed on the cross and then three days later raised from the dead.

## **Conclusion**

On that basis, then, I can offer you the promise of eternal life, and the certainty of the forgiveness of your sins. I took God up on that offer many years ago myself, and beyond glad that I have that assurance, confidence, peace, cleansed conscience, and that I am bound for heaven.

Thus, I have confidence that I shall see with my own eyes the little lights that have preceded us to that glorious place. And you can too. Imagine meeting them all. Imagine meeting the one or two that are your special lights!