

Sunday, January 24, 2016 - The Final Conversation

Next Sunday, January 31, would have been my father's 85th birthday. Three years after his death, I still yearn for the ability to pick up the phone and talk with him about "events of the day" or anything that might be happening. We always seemed to have real and enjoyable conversations through the years. I imagine that is why our final conversation continues to haunt me to this day.

The final week of my parents life was strange, stressful and incredibly sad. Both of them were at home on hospice, with 24 hour care from both family and a hospice service.

Mother's health faltered as she went in and out of consciousness. Her last words to me were a request for more Ensure strawberry shakes, which were about all she could eat at that point. By the time I returned from the store, she had slipped into a coma she would never recover from. Not one of the shakes was ever drunk by her.

Dad, in addition to fighting cancer, suffered from dementia. For the longest time it seemed you would have the same conversation with him multiple times within minutes, yet he never would retain what was discussed. I tell you this because the thrust of our conversation, I'm afraid, never brought him the comfort it should have. Some have told me, through the years, that "I did the best I could" given his health and mental state. While I appreciate the sentiment, God gives us much more material than I used to bring comfort to a Christian in their dying hours.

I walked into the living room and dad was sitting in his recliner with the lights out and the TV off. If you knew my dad, there wasn't a time when he wasn't either reading or watching the TV while in his recliner. As I came into the room, I asked him, "what are you thinking about?" He mentioned to me that he didn't think he was going to be around long. He was always worried about what would happen to mom if he died first. As I assured him mom would be taken care of, he looks at me, with tears in his eyes, and simply says, "what if I'm not ready to die." The statement from him was shocking to hear. This was not a question of being physically ready to die for he had prayed for that for years. Dad was concerned about whether he was spiritually ready to go and be with the Father.

My dad was far from a perfect man. There were things he struggled with and they were often times things that people observed. But for all his faults, he knew God's word. He knew what God's will for us is and he strived to live in accordance with it. He started each day with God's word in his hand. One reason I enjoyed working with him and talking with him was because, when we talked, the conversation almost always revolved around the spiritual implications of the subject at hand. Could he frustrate me? Absolutely. But I thank God each and every day that He gave me a father who loved, feared and instilled the Father's will in his family.

How do we know we are ready to go? Can we know we are ready to go?

The word of God provides us the answer to how we live forever in heaven.

That will be the course of our study this week.