

Richard Hagan Memorial

John 16:33

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We are here to celebrate the life of my friend and brother in Christ, Richard Hagan. And it is a blessing to have members of his family here to celebrate with us.

I first met Richard when I was supply preaching at University Baptist Church where he played the piano for their worship services.

- Richard and Penni later became regulars in Big Bend Bible Fellowship from its inception back when we first started meeting in the Baptist Student Ministry building near Sul Ross.

Richard's exceptional knowledge of God's Word made him a welcome contributor to our Bible study discussions.

- As most of you know, I ask a lot of questions in the course of our Bible studies in order to facilitate more of a discussion.
- There were some occasions where it seemed like it was just Richard and I carrying on a conversation about a passage of Scripture with everyone else just listening in.
- Everyone who participated always appreciated his insights about both the Bible and the weather.

Richard had a love for Bible prophecy which he and I shared.

- He often gave me books to read that introduced me to topics that I hadn't considered before. And these books always enhanced my own understanding of God's Word.
- Richard has already been greatly missed in our Bible study group but I look forward to seeing him in heaven when we can continue our fellowship.

Some of you may remember that Teresa and I invited our friends and family to post a favorite Bible verse on the unfinished interior walls of Moss Creek Chapel while we were building it in 2020.

- Teresa took a photo of what everyone contributed. The passage Richard posted was John 16:33 which says: *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

Jesus said these words as part of His farewell discourse to His disciples in the upper room the day before He went to the cross.

- The peace He offered them was in the midst of the most unlikely circumstances.
- Jesus knew He would be arrested, forsaken, rejected, mocked, humiliated, tortured and executed before the next day was over.

Jesus did not promise peace; He offered it. He said, "*you may have peace.*" People who follow Jesus can still deny themselves this peace.

- We gain the peace Jesus offered by finding it in Him.
- Jesus said, "*that in Me you may have peace.*" We won't find real peace anywhere else other than in Jesus.

One of the reasons Richard may have picked this verse as his favorite is that he had experienced this peace that is only found in Jesus.

The greatest peace Jesus offers us is that He made the way for us to peace with God:

Romans 5:1 – *Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Jesus satisfied the requirements of the Law when He paid the penalty for our being estranged from God through our natural selfish sinfulness.

- And trusting in God's provision for the forgiveness of sins is what makes it possible for us to be in right standing before Him.

We should not be deceived; our good works have no value in earning God's favor for salvation as all religions except biblical Christianity teach...

Ephesians 2:8-9 – *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Grace is the unmerited favor of God, and it is a gift, not something we can work for.

- Our faith in God's provision is what saves us, there is nothing we can do to earn salvation.
- All we can do is respond by accepting God's gift of salvation by trusting in the work of Jesus on the cross.

Another thing Richard no-doubt experienced about the peace that Jesus offers us is that this peace is not just the peace that comes from knowing we'll be with Him in heaven when we die. It is the also kind of peace that helps us deal with the hardships of this fallen world...

Philippians 4:6-7 – Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

This peace of God is one of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

- It is only possible to have peace in the midst of circumstances that are far from peaceful if you have an active relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- It is amazing how we can have peace in a difficult situation if we simply pray about it and trust in the Lord to help us with it.

Richard's verse posted in the chapel also makes it clear that, *in the world you will have tribulation*. Jesus is reminding us here of the reality of our fallen world... there will be difficulties in this life.

- That is the nature of this world and becoming a Christian does not make anyone immune to it.

But unpleasant circumstances do not have to get us down. With God's help, we can turn our troubles into blessings. One of my favorite verses is...

Romans 8:28 – all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose

When people see us responding to unpeaceful circumstances with a peace that surpasses all understanding, they will be attracted to Jesus if they recognize that this peace comes from our relationship with Him.

- So, God can use the adversity in our lives to advance His kingdom.

Richard's verse also tells us that Jesus wants us to *be of good cheer*, in the knowledge that He has *overcome the world*. Sure, Jesus died on the cross which was necessary to pay the penalty for our sin. But He also rose from the dead and spent 40 days revealing to His followers what we get to look forward to in our own resurrected bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:20 refers to Jesus as the first-fruits of the resurrection. Jesus rising from the dead not only showed humanity that there is life after death, it revealed a lot about what we can look forward to as well.

- Jesus made sure we knew that the immortal permanent bodies He will give us will be physical.
- The resurrected Jesus even ate food with His disciples to help them appreciate His new physical nature.
- Eternal life will not be as some ethereal, spirit-being in eternity as some religions teach but we will have a physical nature as we have now, only better.
- Our resurrected bodies will not grow old with aches and pains like we have in our current mortal bodies.

Richard and I liked to discuss what the Bible revealed about eternal life. In our resurrected bodies, we'll have some capabilities we don't have in our mortal bodies...

In His resurrected body, Jesus materialized in the midst of His disciples who were gathered behind locked doors (John 20).

- We can dismiss this with the rationalization that sure, Jesus was God in the flesh and God can do anything.
- But everything Jesus did when He was on earth was for our benefit.

Indeed, Jesus promised us:

John 14:3 – I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also

Richard and I were convinced that Jesus beamed Himself into the midst of His disciples to show us we will have the ability to get around the physical world making use of the spiritual realm.

- The spiritual domain is simply another dimension that we don't have access to in our mortal bodies.
- But we in our resurrected bodies, will be able to be in the spiritual realm... as Jesus said, *where I am, there you may be also*.

We will spend eternity getting to know God better and that will include discovering the wonders of His creation in this vast universe He created for us.

Psalms 19:1 – The heavens declare the glory of God
We will make use of the spiritual realm to explore distant galaxies to learn more about God's creation which will give us insight into the Creator Himself.

- Won't that be a great blessing?

In the meantime, we have an opportunity to experience the peace of God in the here and now.

- It begins by trusting in the fact that Jesus paid our sin-debt on the cross. And as we grow closer to Him getting to know Him through His Word, we will have the peace that surpasses all understanding.
- As we grow in our relationship with Jesus, we have opportunities to lay up treasure in heaven. This treasure refers to the rewards we'll receive for living a life of faithfulness to the Lord.
- And, based on the parables of the talents and minas, our rewards will be degrees of participation in what God will be doing in eternity.
- Our eternal life will not be boring because God is not boring... we'll have plenty to do in getting to know God better, and blessing Him along with our fellow children of God.

I have no doubt that Richard is already benefiting from the heavenly treasure he has laid up during the course of his life. His life in Christ was a good example for the rest of us...

- Richard leaves behind a legacy of faithfulness, love for his family, and a desire to help others grow closer to Jesus.
- Richard was dedicated to living out God's will as best he knew how. And that is a great legacy!

It does pay to serve God. When we as children of God die, we will be blessed with rewards that could not be given to us here on earth.

- When born-again Christians die, they will learn as never before that it does pay to live in the Lord. This world may not applaud, but heaven will.

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father, thank you for Richard's life and the time you've given us to spend with him. And thank you most for the promise of everlasting life made possible by Jesus Christ. That promise really helps us deal with our loss and the reminder of our own mortal condition. Please help us all adjust to being without Richard and help us cope with our loss by growing closer to You. As we share our memories of Richard, please help us remember how You have blessed us through him. We ask all these things in the wonderful name of Jesus Christ, Amen.