

Grant Cornelius' Funeral Remarks

Bishop Cameron Ford, April 8, 2016

I feel privileged to share with you some of my thoughts with you as you think and ponder on the life of our beloved brother Grant Cornelius. I love this good gentle old man. He is an example to me of enduring to the end in the finest way we possibly can. When I relayed the message of his passing, Brother Kevin Carter replied to me: "He could report that he completed his Home Teaching assignment for March – just like every preceding month."

When a loved one passes, it often causes many of us to stop and reflect on the purpose of life. At one time or another, most of us have wondered if there really is a purpose to it all. We wonder if there really is a God; if there really is life after death. This is natural because in life we are given no certain proofs one way or the other. The only real certain proof is that which comes from the Spirit. It is intended to be that way. We are required to walk by faith. We are given the choice of good or evil, of repentance and forgiveness or self justification, of kindness or selfishness, of building or destroying. The absence of absolute proof forces us to reveal by our choices who we really are deep inside.

Brother Cornelius clearly demonstrated what who he was deep inside, and what mattered the most to him. He demonstrated through his life and actions that he was a disciple of Jesus Christ.

But in modern times, among a larger and larger percentage of the world, an obsession with the attitude of skepticism and doubt has become almost a religion; an anti-religion religion. In a past address, President Thomas S Monson makes mention of one such man that was absolutely certain in his skepticism and doubt, that was eventually changed by the power of love. He said:

"Robert Blatchford, in his book *God and My Neighbor*, attacked with vigor the accepted Christian beliefs, such as God, Christ, prayer, and immortality. He boldly asserted: "I claim to have proved everything I set out to prove so fully and decisively that no Christian, however great or able he may be, can answer my arguments or shake my case." He surrounded himself with a wall of skepticism. Then a surprising thing happened. His wall suddenly crumbled to dust. He was left exposed and undefended.

Slowly he began to feel his way back to the faith he had scorned and ridiculed. What caused this profound change in his outlook? His wife died. With a broken heart, he went into the room where all that was mortal of her lay. He looked again at the face he loved so well. Coming out, he said to a friend "It is she and yet it is not she. Everything changed. Something that was there before is taken away. She is not the same. What can be gone if it be not the soul?" Later he wrote: "Death is not what some people imagine. It is only like going into another room. In that other room we shall find ...the dear women and men and the sweet children we have loved and lost." –Thomas Monson, April 1990 Ensign

I testify that there is a purpose to life. We are here to gain a body and to learn who we really are; what we really love, and who we really love. I testify that because of Jesus Christ, there is life after death. We will see Brother Cornelius again in the flesh. And finally, I testify that if we consistently turn our hearts to our Heavenly Father and His son Jesus Christ by honoring their words and keeping their commandments, their love will fill us with a faith and hope that will always triumph over doubt and despair.

In closing, I would like to share the thoughts of President Russell M. Nelson of the quorum of the twelve apostles regarding those left behind after the loss of a loved one:

"Meanwhile, we who tarry here have a few precious moments remaining "to prepare to meet God." (Alma 34:32.) Unfinished business is our worst business. Perpetual procrastination must yield to perceptive preparation. Today we have a little more time to bless others –time to be kinder, more compassionate, quicker to thank and slower to scold, more generous in sharing, more gracious in caring.

Then when our turn comes to pass through the door of death, we can say as did Paul: "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

I pray that we can all be found like unto Brother Cornelius in keeping the faith.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.