



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

Subject: Right with God, Eternity

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FIVE MINUTES FROM ETERNITY

With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation. Psalm 91:16

"Our 747 was traveling between the Philippines and Hawaii," wrote John N. Powell, "and we had just passed the point of no return. It was a cold, stormy night and the plane reciprocated with creaks and groans as it lurched up and down in the wintry storm. Half the passengers were asleep and the other half, like me, were watching the movie with one eye half open.

"Suddenly, the voice of the movie was interrupted by, 'Prepare for emergency landing! Plan to evacuate! All passengers prepare for emergency landing and evacuation!' Time seemed to stop. Soon the cabin came alive with people trying to get out their life jackets, attaching their seat belts, etc. The cabin was still dark and the movie ground on. What do you try to save and what do you forget? How could 340 people pile out of a plane in the middle of the ocean and expect to be saved? I decided they couldn't. This was it!

"All of a sudden," says Mr. Powell as he wrote of his harrowing experience, "the lady across the aisle from me threw her hands up and shouted, 'Oh my God, we're going down!' She had a drink in her hand at the time, and its contents came raining down on me. I thought, 'This plane surely went down in a hurry. We're in the ocean and the water is coming in already.'"

"Suddenly thereafter the movie stopped and the lights came on. An apologetic captain spoke out over the loud speaker, 'Sorry folks, we have had a malfunction on our emergency recorder. No reason for alarm. Everything is all right.'"

Just like that you've gone from five minutes from eternity to the inane plot of a second-class movie. You see the screen but the characters aren't important. What is important is that life will go on and the old grim reaper has been cheated one more time— or is it?

Most of us live much, much closer to eternity than we have any idea of. In essence you are just one heartbeat away from the same fate that the passengers aboard that Boeing 747 thought awaited them.

Recently, I spent long hours at the bedside of a friend, who had been felled by a heart attack, and watched the rhythm of his heart ripple across the screen of the cardiac monitor; and I thought, "How fragile, this thing called life! The only thing that sustains it apart from the direct will of God is the beating of a muscle the size of your fist which we call a heart." Incidentally, the friend made a good recovery, but if he hadn't, there would have been no question in our minds where he would have been had the line gone flat on that heart monitor.

Long ago, Jesus Christ faced the issue of life and death. Roman soldiers nailed Him to the old rugged tree, and life left Him. They put the body in a cold tomb, and most thought it was all over! But three days later, just as He said, He rose from the grave. Death could not keep Him, so Paul, the theologian of the New Testament, could say, "For to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."

That assurance, though, isn't a carte blanche endorsement for everybody who is aboard a 747 that seems only minutes away from crashing. It is a promise to those who have accepted the gift of life which God offers in Jesus Christ. This is why John wrote, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36). It's that simple.

Resource reading: Psalm 91