

Deathbed Confessions

One of the reasons for this site is that I want pilots (and others) to have enough knowledge of God that they can make peace with Him in the moments before death.

Oh man – I can hear the pious reactions already! Probably a lot like the Ivory League theologian who gasped when I told him about my dream for this web site. He said I was encouraging deathbed confessions.

I asked what he thought was the saddest thing about a person living recklessly, and then making peace with God at the last moment and spending eternity in heaven. He said it was that God didn't receive glory from their life. Well, that's a theological professor's, theologically precise answer but it doesn't connect with the everyday experience of most folks who don't know God!

So what *is* the saddest thing about a deathbed confession? Next to the theologically precise one, it is that such a person missed the joy of walking with God. The otherwise unattainable inner fulfillment and wholeness which come from knowing our Maker. A life that is bigger than life itself because it is connected to Him. A good conscience for today and peace about "forever." Having a place of rest and help in the troubles of life. Power to love and forgive. And so much more! Jesus meant it when He said, "My purpose is to give life in all its fullness." (John 10:10b)

Having said all that, I think there's a more common reason that Christians are uncomfortable with the concept of deathbed confessions. It's not just a theological issue – it's less honorable than that.

I believe there are many Christians who, if they had a choice, would live without the constraints of godliness if they knew they could confess their sins and make peace with God at the last moment. They're envious of those who enjoy the pleasures of sin and then go to be with Jesus forever. It seems unfair to them. While they would never say it, they feel "Sheeech – I have to try to be good my whole life so I don't go to hell when I die, and look at him, he got the best of both worlds!"

Why might Christians feel this way? It's because they're not experiencing authentic Christianity! They are frustrated. The church won't let them enjoy unrestrained sin but there is desperately little reward in this life for "being good." Their Christianity is more "have to" than "want to." It is characterized as keeping the rules of an insecure and angry God to avoid getting clubbed with His big stick – rather than by a personal relationship with a loving God Whose hand of kindness is always extended toward us. It's a creepy kind of "Christianity" that too many know too well.

I grieve that so many in the church are missing the richness of what it means to know Jesus and to walk with God. If you are among them, I dare you to pursue a whole new quality of walk with God. Many articles on this site can help you.

When you do, you will help others see Christianity for what it really is. There's a whole lotta' people out there who haven't seen much of that! They need to see it in us – so they can choose to make peace with God now, live for Him, and show still others the way!

And if you're not a Christian, I hope I can help you come to know God and to experience the fullness of life that He offers. Now! But this life is only a breath compared to eternity, and I hope that at the very least, you will come to yourself and accept God's love in the end – if you have that opportunity. I expect to meet some people in heaven who say, "You know what Ken! I wasted my life, but I came to my senses just before we hit and I gave myself to God. I was a fool to not do that sooner, but here I am. Thanks for telling me!"

Deathbed confessions are better than no confession at all, but why cheat yourself now when you can have the best of both worlds!

Born in 1940, Ken Stoltzfus has worked as a pilot, ordained Christian minister, businessman, missionary to Africa and writer. This is #17 in his series "The View from up Life's Path", and is one of many short articles that can be found at www.John2031.com.

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