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Martin Burnham Went to Heaven

"God took him"

(Genesis 5:24).

by Tom Stewart

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Preface

On Friday morning, June 7th 2002, Martin Burnham-- an American Christian missionary held captive along with his wife Gracia by the Muslim Abu Sayyaf in the jungles of southern Zamboanga del Norte province of the Philippines-- was killed in a rescue attempt by the Philippine military. "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His Saints" (Psalm 116:15). Martin, a graduate of Calvary Bible College of Kansas City, Missouri was a senior pilot for New Tribes Mission in the Philippines. Fellow captive, Philippine nurse Deborah Yap was also slain. Deborah was captured about a week after the Burnhams. Though it is unclear whether the two were killed by friendly fire or by their captors' bullets (since both sides used similar weapons), *it is certain that the Abu Sayyaf, who used their captives as human shields, was responsible for Martin and Deborah's life ending circumstances* in that final 20 minute firefight. "Knowing this, that the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers..." (1Timothy 1:9,10). Gracia Burnham was wounded in the right leg, but was successfully freed from her captors. After being treated in a Philippine hospital, she returned to her children and family in Rose Hill, Kansas on June 10th. Continue to pray for Gracia and her children's spiritual and physical welfare after having undergone this more than yearlong ordeal in the Philippines. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). [For more background on the Burnhams' captivity, read our editorial, "[Pray for the Burnham's Release](#)" -- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Edit_Prayer_for_the_Burnhams.html --.]

Martin Died Well

Since Martin and Gracia's May 27th 2001 capture, the 9-11 bombing of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by Islamic terrorists, have put into perspective the Burnhams' difficult experience. [See our articles, "[Significance of the Attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon](#)" -- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Edit_Attack.WTC.Pentagon.html --, and "[Christian Response to Terrorism](#)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Response.to.Terrorism.html> -- for a Scriptural perspective on recent events, the war on terrorism, Islam, and how we should then live.] "And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1Chronicles 12:32). The Abu Sayyaf, an Islamic separatist group, has been engaged in terrorism and hostage taking for ransom in their struggle against the predominantly Catholic government of the Philippines. Their conduct is consistent with the Koran. "Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have

prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, [which is Islam that abolishes all other religions] of the people of the Book, [meaning the Jews and the Christians] until they pay the Jizya [the tax imposed upon them] with willing submission and feel themselves subdued [with humiliation and submission to the government of Islam]" (9:29) (text from the Koran, with a commentary in brackets from the Tafsir Al-Jalalein, i.e., Al-Jalalein Interpretation of the Koran.) "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). On February 23rd 1998, Osama bin Laden issued the following "Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders: World Islamic Front Statement": "The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies -- civilians and military -- is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty Allah, 'and fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together,' and 'fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah.'" "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go" (Proverbs 22:24).

For the last several months, U.S. Special Forces have been training Filipino Rangers and providing support and intelligence for missions such as Operation Daybreak, assisting the Philippine government in the war on terrorism against the al Qaeda linked Abu Sayyaf. Current deployment of American military forces in the Philippines is scheduled to terminate in July 2002. In Operation Daybreak, the Philippine military had been tracking the Abu Sayyaf for twelve days, finding about 50 Muslim fighters resting by a creek in heavy rain. The ensuing 20 minute firefight left four Abu Sayyaf dead, seven Philippine soldiers wounded, and both Martin Burnham and Deborah Yap dead. "For whether we live, we live unto the LORD; and whether we die, we die unto the LORD: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the LORD's" (Romans 14:8).

Gracia relates that Martin died well and peacefully. "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8). It was raining. Both Martin and Gracia were resting on a hammock under a tarp, when the fighting began. They were hit right away. Dropping to the ground, they slid down a hill. Gracia crawled to Martin and could see from the blood on his upper body that his wounds were serious. Both were already fully aware that they might never return home alive. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). They were emaciated and malnourished during their year of captivity-- often on the run. Martin had been required by his captors to carry bags of rice, which he did without complaint. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2Timothy 2:3). Physically stronger than Gracia, it was thought that he had a better chance of surviving their ordeal. Shortly before the unexpected shots rang out, Martin had been talking about the LORD. He had said,

"If I have to go, I want to go out strong for the LORD."

He did. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2Timothy 4:7).

God Prepared Martin

Before that fatal day, Martin had the feeling that he was not going to see his children again; so, he

composed a farewell letter, which he had given to Gracia. The letter was lost during the fire, but was later recovered by the Philippine military at Gracia's request. "6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand... 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the LORD, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2Timothy 4:6, 8). Likewise, Christ's departure was necessary to prepare His disciples for their departure. "2 In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3). The good that Martin would do in his farewell letter, would prepare his family for their subsequent departure. "25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more... 32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:25, 32).

Christian readiness to do the right thing now is essential for us to be ready to depart for Heaven in the immediate or distant future. "14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our LORD Jesus Christ hath shewed me. 15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance" (2Peter 1:14-15). The prophet Ezekiel did not take casually the necessity to be ready to depart for Heaven-- knowing that, those who are *not* ready, could *not* depart for Heaven. "12 Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth. 13 When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it" (Ezekiel 33:12-13). If we did not have to cooperate with the LORD in our preparation to be taken Home by death or Rapture, then He would not have troubled Himself to tell us so plainly to be ready to meet Him at any moment. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (Matthew 24:44). Christ's directions to us are filled with admonitions to be ready. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36). A lack of actively following the LORD in readiness means that we will *not* see Him. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD" (Hebrews 12:14). [See our article, "[How to Be Ready for the Rapture](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Timeline/How.to.Be.Ready.Rapture.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Timeline/How.to.Be.Ready.Rapture.html> --, to see the relation between our actions and His in making us ready to be raptured.] But, we must arm ourselves with the "Exceeding Great and Precious Promises" (2Peter 1:4) and look "unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of Our Faith" (Hebrews 12:2), *not* looking down at the angry waves that would pull us down, for He is "able to make [us] stand" (Romans 14:4).

We *must* cooperate in our readiness, but it is God's role to make ready those who are trusting Him. "LORD, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble: Thou wilt prepare their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear" (Psalm 10:17). Though the New Covenant offers even more opportunity for the Professed People of God to be ready, even the Old Testament gave the Faithful the opportunity for that readiness. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD" (Proverbs 16:1). It is God's New Covenant purpose and function to prepare His people to obey Him now and to be ready to meet Him then. "And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to

walk in My Statutes, and ye shall keep My Judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:27). ***It should not surprise us that the LORD used the Philippine jungles and the Abu Sayyaf to complete Martin Burnham's preparation for Heaven.*** "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). Wherever we need completion of the work begun in us, God will faithfully finish the job-- of course, *only* with our cooperation. "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the Day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). It is He that works in us "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (2:13). His faithfulness to complete the work is *not* the issue. "Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it" (1Thessalonians 5:24). Ours is to faithfully *cooperate* with the Holy Spirit in the sanctification that fits us for Heaven. "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17).

God Proved Martin

It is part of our sanctification that God must prove us. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Exodus 20:20). God's history with His people demonstrates our need of being proved and tested by our Heavenly Father. "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt [Hebrew, nacah] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am" (Genesis 22:1). In this instance, the LORD God proved Abraham to see whether he would "keep His Commandments, or no" (Deuteronomy 8:2). ***Martin had to be proved by the Almighty-- as we must be-- of His willingness to love and obey the LORD-- even to the end.*** "Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from Heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove [Hebrew, nacah] them, whether they will walk in My Law, or no" (Exodus 16:4). God's purpose in proving us, is to do us good. "Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that He might prove [nacah] thee, to do thee good at thy latter end" (Deuteronomy 8:16).

Whether it was Abraham being proved on Mount Moriah or the Children of Israel being proved for forty years in the Wilderness, the point of our suffering and tribulation on this planet, is that God would demonstrate for Himself a people "holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). Either we esteem ourselves higher than we ought to think, or our estimation of God's holiness is too low, but we do not seem to realize the need for the Almighty to prove us. "2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:2-4). It was not in answer to a taunt, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" (Job 1:9), from the Wicked One that Job was tested; but, it was that the LORD would refine and prove Job, whom the Almighty considered to be already a "perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil" (1:8), that Job was proved and tested. ***Only an All Wise God is fit to tell why it took over a year of captivity to prove and prepare Martin Burnham; but, how much longer would it take for the rest of us?*** "Thou shalt guide me with Thy Counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24). And, we can be sure that all that name the name of Christ will be likewise proved in manifold different ways. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2Timothy 3:12).

Martin Was a Type for the Rapture

Martin Burnham was an individual, who friend Clay Bowlin recalls as being embarrassed by too much attention; but still, Martin's death has brought him much attention. For Martin, "to live [was] Christ, and to die [was] gain" (Philippians 1:21). His past life testified that he wanted simply to be a follower of Christ. "Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). Speaking at Rose Hill Bible Church, Martin's home church in Rose Hill, Kansas on May 23rd 2001, four days before his capture, Martin said,

"I wasn't called to be a missionary; I wasn't called to the Philippines;
I was just called to follow Christ; and that is what I'm doing."

Every bush for a Christian is a burning bush, and all ground is holy ground. "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1Peter 1:15). Martin's life, in its simplicity of following Christ, makes him an apt picture of what the Church ought to be-- followers of Christ. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1Peter 2:21).

- *Martin Burnham departed suddenly*, "in the twinkling of an eye" (1Corinthians 15:52). Only by a continual vigilance, can we be ready for the Rapture. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (Matthew 24:44). It may be objected that too much attention given to the Rapture and the events attending the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus Christ takes away our attention from soul winning, discipleship, and personal sanctification; but, it can be historically documented that the Modern Missions Movement of the 1800s was fueled by the hope that obedience to the Great Commission would hasten the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus, i.e., "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). [See our article, "[Meet Mr. Philadelphia](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Meet.Mr.Philadelphia.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Meet.Mr.Philadelphia.html> --, concerning the ministry of [A. T. Pierson](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/A.T.Pierson.html) -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/A.T.Pierson.html> --, who sought the "evangelization of the world in this generation," i.e., by 1900.]
- *Martin Burnham was occupied with what he was supposed to be doing, when he left*. "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). As a missionary pilot, Martin was transporting people, supplies, or simply encouragement. He was attempting to maintain a Christlike walk-- even in the most difficult circumstances of captivity in the Philippine jungles. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1Corinthians 10:31). Martin said,

"We might not leave this jungle alive,
but at least we can leave this world serving the Lord with gladness.
We can serve Him right here where we are, and with gladness."

If we will endeavour to serve the LORD in the fullest way that we understand, then we will be exercising the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given us. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1Corinthians 12:7). If we "walk in love" (Ephesians 5:2), we will be exercising our spiritual gift, whatever it is, even if we know not what to call it. "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and

all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing" (1Corinthians 13:2). If we are pointing to Christ, then we are walking "in faith and love" (2Timothy 1:13). We will either be evangelizing the Lost, revitalizing the Backslidden, or discipling the Faithful. "Make full proof of thy ministry" (2Timothy 4:5).

- *Martin Burnham had been carefully prepared.* "'For Thou, O God, hast proved us: Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried" (Psalm 66:10). It was no accident that the simple act of a missionary couple celebrating their wedding anniversary at that Palawan resort hotel would turn into national news, especially when their terrorist, hostage taking, life threatening ordeal ended more than a year later with Martin's death and Gracia's freedom. "6 The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me. 7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. 8 For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. 9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living" (Psalm 116:6-9). What was God thinking when He allowed the Abu Sayyaf to seize Martin and Gracia? "11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. 12 Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. 13 And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:11-13). God is more concerned than we are that we live perpetually ready to meet Him by death or Rapture. "I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). Why we are still alive is more than the sum total of all the wise, thoughtful, or clever things that we have done to assure our health or well-being. "What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" (Ecclesiastes 1:3). We live because God still has a purpose in our breathing. "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). And, why we still have not been Raptured, is more than the totality of all of our desire to be departed from our present circumstances. "23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Philippians 1:23-24). We remain because our Heavenly Father must complete the preparation of something further in our lives that will better fit us for Eternity, that we "may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Colossians 4:12).
- *Martin Burnham was taken, while others were left.* "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Matthew 24:40). Martin, of course, died, and we, of course, remain; but still, Martin's departure demonstrates a type for the Rapture, in that, when the dust settles, some will have departed, of course, bodily. "Come up hither" (Revelation 4:1). Would to God that all Professed Christians today were True Followers of Christ! "Not every one that saith unto Me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the Will of My Father which is in Heaven" (Matthew 7:21). As much as we desire to remain and be useful, our future is not an earthly dynasty, built in our own image, and handed down to the fittest offspring that can hold it; instead, we long for a more enduring, Heavenly mansion, graced with the presence of our Creator, Saviour, and Dearest Friend-- Jesus. "20 For our conversation is in Heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the LORD Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the Working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:20-21). ***As much as we may envy Martin's promotion to Glory, we know that his family's heartache of***

missing his love, presence, support, and caring can only be addressed by fully embracing the LORD Jesus Christ as the Answer to every need that we can conceive. "30 But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption: 31 that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the LORD" (1Corinthians 1:30-31). Martin was taken, and others were left; but thankfully, he will precede us only by a short space, because Jesus promised, "I come quickly" (Revelation 3:11). [Read more about how Jesus is supposed to be our all in all. See "[Relations of Christ to the Believer](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Relations.Christ.Believer.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Relations.Christ.Believer.html> -- by [Charles G. Finney](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html) -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html> -- and A. T. Pierson's "[In Christ Jesus](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/In.Christ.Jesus.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/In.Christ.Jesus.html> --.]

Conclusion

As a True Christian, Martin Burnham lived for God, and rightly but secondarily for "his neighbour as himself" (Mark 12:33). On June 14th, Martin, a native of Rose Hill, Kansas, was memorialized at a two-hour service in Rose Hill, attended by about 2,600 people-- including Philippines Ambassador Albert del Rosario, Sen. Sam Brownback, Rep. Todd Tiahrt, and former Kansas Sen. Bob Dole. Gracia reminisced that Martin, who as a rule was nightly handcuffed to a tree by his captors, would look his armed captors in the face and say, "Thank you very much," each time he was so restrained, because he had purposed that he would remain joyous even during this most trying time of his life. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1Thessalonians 5:18). Sure, it is easy to thank God for the good times, but we must also thank Him for the difficult times, because our times are in the hands of our Gracious, All Knowing, and Omnipotent Father. "My times are in Thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me" (Psalm 31:15).

The following letter was movingly read on the Ken Burns PBS documentary "The Civil War," while the series theme song, a Scottish lament, "Ashokan [a-shó-kun] Farewell"-- composed by Jay Ungar-- was played with great feeling by a violin accompanied with guitar. It was reported that Martin Burnham's memorial service on June 14th in Rose Hill, Kansas was to include a sermon by a college friend of Martin, Kansas City Pastor Clay Bowlin, with a special song, "Ashokan Farewell"-- which was specially requested by Martin, should he die as a hostage. Notice the similarities between Maj. Sullivan Ballou's thoughts about impending death, his gratitude to God for his wife and family, his feelings about the necessity of the service that he had undertaken, and his hope of seeing his wife again... in the Resurrection.

(A week before the battle of Bull Run, Sullivan Ballou, a Major in the 2nd Rhode Island Volunteers, wrote home to his wife in Smithfield.)

July 14, 1861
Camp Clark, Washington DC

Dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days - perhaps tomorrow. And lest I should not be able to write you again I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I am no more.

I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how American Civilization now leans upon the triumph of the government and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution. And I am willing - perfectly willing - to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this government, and to pay that debt.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but omnipotence can break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly with all those chains to the battlefield. The memory of all the blissful moments I have enjoyed with you come crowding over me, and I feel most deeply grateful to God and you, that I have enjoyed them for so long. And how hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes and future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and see our boys grown up to honorable manhood around us.

If I do not return, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I loved you, nor that when my last breath escapes me on the battle field, it will whisper your name...

Forgive my many faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless, how foolish I have sometimes been!...

But, O Sarah, if the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they love, I shall always be with you, in the brightest day and in the darkest night... always, always. And when the soft breeze fans your cheek, it shall be my breath, or the cool air your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by.

Sarah do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for me, for we shall meet again...

(Sullivan Ballou was killed a week later at the 1st Battle of Bull Run.)

"13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. 15 For this we say unto you by the Word of the LORD, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the LORD shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the LORD Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the LORD. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these Words" (1Thessalonians 4:13-18).

"We might not leave this jungle alive,
but at least we can leave this world serving the Lord with gladness.
We can serve Him right here where we are, and with gladness"

-- Martin Burnham.

Maranatha!