

**The Eulogy of
Opal Yunghans Fulk
(May 29, 1930 – April 18, 2007)
First Baptist Church
Platte City, Missouri
Monday, April 30, 2007**

We have gathered here together today to celebrate the transfer of Opal Fulk's soul and spirit from time into eternity.

I use the word "celebrate" because this is the attitude that Opal would wish for us to have. Make no mistake; this is indeed a time of sorrow. But sorrow is a human emotion that is natural for those who are left behind by a loved one's departure to be with the Lord. It is the result of a sudden realization that there can never again be a time for earthly fellowship, companionship, or rapport.

Yet, although sorrow and grief are normal and legitimate emotions, they do not overwhelm those who have placed their trust in Christ. Stronger than these emotions is the clear testimony of biblical truth that applies to Opal's death and these principles provide for her family and friends a source of great joy and thanksgiving.

I did not know Opal very long. She lived in Kansas City, I live in St. Louis. More precisely, she lived in Platte City, I live in St. Charles. I am famous for being the pastor who has the most boring church in America. We have a no-frills approach to worship. We study the Bible, we find out what God wants us to do, and then give it our best effort. Opal was looking for such an approach and found us on the Internet and began worshipping with us about five years ago.

Opal and a group I call the Kansas City Ladies would occasionally drive over to Chesterfield, where our church is presently located, to attend Sunday services. My wife and I were privileged to enjoy Sunday afternoon lunches with them where we got to know her and the other ladies over a leisurely meal. We enjoyed talking about the Lord, the Word, and what we had learned from them. What I really did not have time to adequately develop was a thorough appreciation for the dynamic personality with whom I was breaking bread: the effervescent, fun-loving, gregarious, and highly active Mrs. Opal Fulk.

I mentioned earlier how the purpose of the Christian way of life is to study the Bible, find out what God wants us to do, and then as best we can to set about doing it. Opal is a monument to this ideal. Her son David shared with me some of the things that this woman accomplished as a daily routine during her life. She was a magnificent wife and mother. She was a loyal helpmeet to her husband Howard in their 56 years together. She nurtured four boys into men who themselves established homes in which Christ is welcome. During her life her days were filled with activities that would exhaust most women of the twenty-first century: she prepared meals, sewed and mended clothes, raised a garden, kept an immaculate house, and in her spare time offered a helping hand to others. She attended concerts, school performances, and the various sporting events that her sons played. She continued to follow this same circuit for her grand and great grandchildren. She led all four of her sons to the Lord, taught them the Bible, and took them to church. She liked to sing hymns, play games, and ride in fast cars. In short, Opal enjoyed life.

But how does one acquire the mental attitude to really enjoy life? What does it take to develop the disposition that enables a person to truly take life by the horns and ride it for all its worth and at the same time maintain personal integrity? Life has so much to offer those who know how to do it. But *how* to do it is the question that escapes most. Opal learned the secret to enjoying life early in her life and maximized it all the way through her ride down the Death-Shadowed Valley.

There are a few things that Opal included in her average day that I did not mention but they are the keys to a happy, prosperous, and productive life. Every day Opal studied the Bible for at least one hour and then spent another hour in prayer. The invisible impact from these two hours of daily duty before the Lord is being presently reflected in the lives of many who have gathered to pay their last respects to this heroine of grace.

I usually have comforting comments to make to the family of the deceased but there is no need for me to take that time here today. Opal's life communicated the principles that bring comfort to her sons and daughters-in-law: Chuck and Bunny, Jeff and Mary, Steve and Phyllis, and David and Carolyn; her grandchildren: C. J. and Melissa, Nathan, Alisha, and Jonathan, Brandy and Brad, and Little Davis; her brothers, Richard and Sherman; and her eight great grandchildren.

She lived her faith and it was reflected in all that she did and it was expressed by the love she gave to each of you. You shall rightly miss her, but know that you were blessed by her presence and recognize that you are now challenged to continue her legacy in her absence.

Opal instructed me personally to not spend much time talking about her. But I felt at least a summary of her character was necessary for me to get around to taking about what she did instruct for me to say. I assume all who have gathered here today knew Opal well. Why attend a memorial service of a person you do not know? Also, I feel justified in the assumption that you respected her for the person she was and admired her for the manner of life she lived. I am confident that anyone may live such a life if they are willing to follow Opal's lead. She of course would never want to be lifted up as a person to be emulated. But nevertheless, she is the testimony we have before us today.

I submit to you that Opal found the secret to a fulfilling life. She recognized this fact personally. Her desire is that I tell you about this secret; not to aggrandize her but rather to let you in on how you too may discover this treasure if you have not already.

First of all we must come to grips with the fact that God determines the timing of both life and death. When we are born physically He chooses to select us for human life by imputing a soul to our physical body. Without a soul there is no life. Further, no one dies unless and until God signs off on it, at which time, for the believer in Christ, his soul and spirit are removed from the body and transferred to heaven.

David spoke in Psalm 23 of the "valley of the shadow of death." This is the believer's last stage of life here on earth. It can last only a second or it can go for years. But the thing that lights the way is what the believer has in his soul. If he has learned nothing about the grace and love of God, nothing about God's plan and his place in it, then the darkness of fear, dread, and panic accompanied by doubt, anger, and bitterness prevent him from enjoying the grace of dying.

The believer who is prepared, who knows all about the circumstances that are involved in death, has a soul armored with confidence and courage. Confidence that he has eternal life and will go to heaven when he dies gives him the courage to live the remainder of his life without fear so that he can continue to serve the Lord.

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Through Bible study a believer begins to acquire a treasure trove of divine guidance in his soul. No one can accumulate this treasure unless he is saved. No one is saved unless he believes in Christ.

It is from this foundation that a person's life may be permanently changed. It is from this faith response that one may begin to refocus his attention away from the details of this life over to the divine guidance provided by the Word of God.

The New Testament speaks of placing one's faith in Christ. But Christ is a title, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah. The Messiah-Christ defines an individual that is both undiminished deity and true humanity in one person. He possesses absolute sinless perfection in both His deity and His humanity.

Every member of the human race however is imperfect and therefore cannot offer any justification to a perfect God why he would be qualified to live for all eternity in the presence of Deity.

Helpless to do anything about the problem, God provided a solution through His uniquely-born Son. Jesus' perfection qualified Him to be our substitute on the cross where the sins of the entire human race were transferred to Him and judged. We know that His sacrifice was successful because after three days He was resurrected from the dead.

The question is, "Do you believe this?" You may believe that all of this is a historical fact alright but do you believe that faith in Christ saves you? Do you understand that by believing Jesus of Nazareth is the God/Man Savior you receive eternal life and go to heaven when you die?

To be delivered from the lake of fire and to receive eternal life, you must place your faith in the reality of the claim that Jesus' work on the cross delivers you from your sins and places you in the family of God. There is nothing more to do: no works, no penance, no feeling sorry for what a cad you are, no getting baptized, no joining a church, no nothing.

When Paul and Silas crossed the Dardanelles bringing the doctrines of New Testament theology into the West their first stop was the Roman colony of Philippi where their preaching in the public square landed them in jail. Undaunted, these two men began evangelizing their fellow inmates when an earthquake hit the area causing the prison's doors to open wide. But no one tried to escape because they were riveted to the men's message. Having overheard the testimonies of Paul and Silas, the jailer asked them what he must do to be saved.

Now get this: it was Paul and Silas's responsibility to tell this man the correct answer, to not leave anything out, yet be brief. Here's what they told him:

Acts 16:31 - Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved ...

That's all they said to him regarding what he needed to do, because all that is required is faith alone in Christ alone.

When the Lord spoke to Nicodemus in John 3 he presented him with a choice that, if made, would have a purpose and a result. There is an important word in John 3:16, a small, simple word pronounced *hē'-nā*. It is generally translated into the English by the word "that." In the Greek it introduces both purpose and result. Let's take a look at the verse:

John 3:16 - "God loved the world so much He gave [this is grace, no gift can be a gift that requires something on the part of the recipient] His uniquely-born Son, so that [ἵνα, *hina*: introduces both purpose and result] whoever believes in Him [this is the necessary condition to achieve the purpose and the result] shall not perish [purpose of believing: Nicodemus would be delivered from the lake of fire when he dies] but have eternal life [result of believing: Nicodemus would be imputed eternal life and would go to heaven when he dies].

What qualification does the Lord Himself stipulate for the acquisition of eternal life? Anyone who believes in Him! The word "believe" is the Greek verb πιστεύω. The noun form is πίστις, and is translated "faith." The verb is transitive which places the merit of one's belief on the object. The object is Jesus Christ. Belief in the Person and work of Christ results in salvation and the reception of eternal life.

We know that Nicodemus came to believe in Christ because John 19:39 informs us that he assisted Joseph of Arimathea in preparing the body of Christ for burial after Pilate had released it to them.

Therefore, we may immediately begin to pull some biblical principles together so that we can form a rationale and draw a conclusion.

First of all, this verse tells the unbeliever how to be saved. That's the *purpose* of believing in Christ. Salvation is deliverance from the lake of fire.

Secondly, this verse tells the unbeliever the *result* of believing in Christ. Eternal life is imputed at the moment one believes in Christ but doesn't become operational until physical death. Nicodemus believed in Christ. So did Opal. So have many of you. So may any of you who are here today without Christ, without hope, and without eternal life. When you know you possess eternal life it provides confidence to face life and circumstances and to do so with great courage. When you live under the power of this truth it changes your life.

Absolute confidence in the fact you have eternal life and that you will be transferred out of this life into the presence of God and Christ when you die gives you courage to do your duty for the Lord right up until the moment you exit the Death-Shadowed Valley.

In case any of you have not understood the simplicity of salvation then here is a concise statement of the gospel:

"Jesus of Nazareth, Who is both perfect God and sinless Man, was sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the human race after which He died, was buried, and three days later was resurrected from the dead. The **purpose** of these things is so that anyone who believes them will be delivered from retribution in the lake of fire when he dies. The **result** of these things is that anyone who believes them has eternal life and will go to heaven when he dies." Do you believe this?

If you do, then you have all the assets necessary to grow in grace and achieve the level of spiritual maturity that Opal enjoyed.

This introduces the second thing she wanted me to make crystal clear to you here today. You will never be happy in this world until you understand this world cannot make you happy. Only God can do this and he does it through His Word which you must appropriate into your souls.

A great tragedy has occurred within our nation. The simplicity of attaining salvation and eternal life has become complicated. The Bible clearly teaches that there are three phases to the plan of God: (1) salvation, (2) the Christian way of life, and (3) heaven.

The tragedy that has occurred in this nation is that theologians have inverted the first two phases. There is the false doctrine that claims how one lives his life determines whether or not he will be saved and go to heaven when he dies. This asserts that eternal salvation is dependent upon human good, human works, and human energy.

This is a lie right out of the heart of hell. Salvation is based on the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Salvation occurs when you simply believe that Jesus Christ was judged in your place for your sins, that He died physically on the cross, and, after three days, was resurrected from the dead.

The lie that salvation is based on good works causes many to spend a lifetime trying to be good but sadly learn the moment after death they were not good enough. The reason? They placed their faith in their own good works. The Bible tells us that our faith must be placed in the work of Christ for salvation.

Ephesians 2:8 - By grace you have been saved through faith, and this salvation is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

v. 9 - not as a result of works, so that no one should boast.

Galatians 2:16 - A man is not justified by the works of the Law but rather through faith in Christ Jesus. We have believed in Christ Jesus, in order that we may be justified by faith in Christ, not by works of the Law. By the works of the Law shall no individual be justified.

Acts 16:31 - Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved.

Consequently, when any person believes in Christ at that moment in time his soul is saved, he is imputed eternal life, and he enters into the phase two, the spiritual life of the believer in time. No one can live the Christian way of life unless he is a Christian. No one can be a Christian unless he believes in Christ.

Salvation thus occurs at a moment of time through faith alone in Christ alone. One second later the believer begins his spiritual life. How you live it depends upon whether you will devote yourself to learning, understanding, and applying biblical principles to your life.

Opal understood clearly the importance of learning and applying the Word of God. It is one thing to study the Bible, it is another to truly believe its message. And the most difficult is to apply that message to the circumstances of life. The reason application is so difficult is that so few understand how to live the Christian way of life.

Some Christians devote a great deal of time to Bible study and through the power of the Holy Spirit are enabled to apply its principles to their lives. They, like Opal, come to a point where they learned to live life to the fullest. Through spiritual growth they passed the point where they have a fear of dying.

Some Christians devote no time at all to studying the Bible and thus never apply these principles to their lives. They have no tranquility of soul, they have no clarity of thought, therefore, they lead unhappy lives, and they fear death.

Most Christians are somewhere in between. They usually devote a lot of time to church activities but pay very little interest to what the Bible actually teaches. They are very pious about certain things but learning the whole vista of biblical principles does not interest them. Their pseudo saintliness is the result of involvement in the dark side of morality. These individuals are confused but this does not discouraged them from confusing others. Their idea of the Christian way of life is thus distorted and contradictory because they do not know what God really thinks or what He actually requires of them. These types of believes are classified by Paul in:

Philippians 3:18 - Many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,

v. 19 - whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

Opal was not among this ilk. She was an invisible hero with regard to the unseen battles that rage in the Invisible War. Her impact upon this spiritual combat cannot be measured. Her consistent application of truth however has been observed by many. She took the message of God's wonderful plan to all who would give her a hearing. She applied the principles of dying grace to her life and thus never feared dying.

Whether a believer or an unbeliever, there are some of you who arrived here today with fear of death. I don't know who you are but nevertheless, you are here. The writer of Hebrews describes your condition and its solution in:

Hebrews 2:14 - Since mankind shares in blood and flesh, Jesus Himself also partook of the same blood and flesh in order that through His spiritual death on the cross He might render powerless the one who has the power of physical death, that is, the devil;

v. 15 - and in order that He might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Jesus Christ has paid for the sins of every person who ever lived. Every sin you commit—those past, those you are committing right now, those you will commit tomorrow—all were judged in Christ as your substitute.

At the moment of faith in Christ all pre-salvation sins are forgiven. All mankind's sins were judged in Christ but only those who believe in His work on the cross have their sins forgiven. And forgiveness of sin is what appropriates eternal life.

Those who do believe enter into phase two. They have the filling of the Holy Spirit and they have a tremendous number of spiritual assets that will enable them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christians sin after salvation because the body of corruption has a trend to sin. However, according to the Apostle John:

1 John 1:9 - If we confess to God our post-salvation sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our post-salvation sins and to purify us from all wrongdoing.

This verse instructs the believer on the mechanics of sin management: confession alone to God alone. Once this confessional prayer is expressed to God, the believer is filled with the Holy Spirit, returned to fellowship with God, and enabled to resume his spiritual growth.

This sequence describes the means by which a believer can execute the Christian way of life. Again, we all sin and come short of the glory of God. We recover from sin by confessing it to God Who forgives us of the sin as noted in 1 John 1:9. We are returned to fellowship with Him and filled with the Holy Spirit. It is through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit that we are able to understand what the Bible says. Supernatural knowledge demands a supernatural teacher and the Lord advised His apostles that the Father would provide such a teacher in:

John 14:26 - But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

And thus we learn from Paul that the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry is the only way a believer can grow in grace:

1 Corinthians 2:11 - What man understands the things of man except man's spirit within him? Even so, the things of God no one has known except the Holy Spirit.

v. 12 - But we have not received the world's spirit but the human spirit from the source of God in order that we might have a permanent knowledge of things that have been graciously given to us by God,

v. 13 - which things we teach, not by teaching from the source of man's wisdom, but by teaching from the source of the Holy Spirit, bringing together spiritual truth to a spiritual system.

v. 14 - The soulish man does not accept things from the Holy Spirit for to him they are foolishness, furthermore, he is not able to even acquire academic understanding of these things because they are spiritually discerned.

This passage clearly reveals that spiritual growth is only possible through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit and this ministry is only functional for the believer that is in fellowship with God. Fellowship with God is enjoyed by those who consistently confess their sins to Him. Filled with the Holy Spirit they may then study the Word of God and acquire an inventory of ideas that is based on the absolute standards of divine truth.

This is what Opal Fulk understood and it is through this system that she was able to grow in grace to the point that she not only did not fear death, she enjoyed her life right up to the point she was transferred from time into eternity and before the presence of the Lord.

Her knowledge of the Word of God gave her a relaxed mental attitude toward both death and life. Consequently, she enjoyed life. She was truly a happy person. True happiness is not an emotion but an inner resource that is not dependent upon circumstances of life but rather finds its source in complete orientation to the plan of God. Knowing that you are in God's perfect care and that every aspect of your life is known to Him provides a peace that passes all understanding. And Opal had it.

This super-abundance of happiness enabled her to live her life in the light of eternity. She took life one day at a time and lived it to the maximum. Not fearing death enabled her to enjoy living. This kind of happiness depends upon a source of power that does not vary, but is absolute and immutable. Here are a few of these absolute principles revealed in the Bible that contribute to the development of true happiness:

- 1- Believers will not face judgment:

Romans 8:1 - There is no judgment for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- 2- When a believer dies, his soul and spirit are instantly transferred from the human body to heaven and into the presence of the Lord:

2 Corinthians 5:8 - I prefer to be absent from the body and to be at home, face to face with the Lord.

- 3- Heaven is a place where the believer will never face the exigencies of human life:

Revelation 21:4 - "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning; or crying, or pain; the former things have passed away."

- 4- Believers have phenomenal blessings reserved for them in heaven. The degree to which they are transferred is in proportion to how far the believer advances in the knowledge of God's plan during his life on this earth.

1 Peter 1:4 - (God the Father has caused us to be born again in order) to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

- 5- The believer will be provided with an eternal place of residence in the eternal state:

John 14:1 - "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

v. 2 - "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.



v. 3 - “And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am there you may be also.”

- 6- The believer is imputed eternal life at salvation. Sharing the life of God is necessary in order to live eternally with God:

1 John 5:11 - God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son.

v. 13 - These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.

- 7- The believer also knows that he will be provided with a resurrection body:

1 John 3:2 - We are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

Opal not only knew all these things she believed all these things. As a result she had tranquility of soul and possessed true happiness.

I have now fulfilled the duty that Opal invested to me. You are now challenged to pick up the gauntlet and do your duty before the Lord. With that, I leave you with this Latin proverb: *Qui non proficit deficit*: He who does not advance, falls behind.

To the members of the Fulk family: you are in a brief period of sorrow but because of your confidence in the veracity of God's immutable Word, this grief will soon be replaced by the joyous expectation of the promised future reunion. May the grace of God and the power of His doctrine in your souls sustain you in the interim. For the believer, death is the Lord's victory. For you who are left behind your motto remains: *Vincit omnia veritas*: Doctrine conquers all.

And in memoriam to a loyal Dorito and fellow member of the royal family of God, I proclaim this as Opal's legacy: *Triumpho morte tam vita*: I triumph in death, as in life.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we come to your throne of grace today, saddened by the death of a mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, great grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend. Yet we have learned from Your Word that such sorrow is only experienced by those who are left behind. And so we are encouraged by the knowledge that You rejoice in the death of Your saints and that Opal is happily in Your presence.

Thus, it is our prayer that Your grace will comfort those who now find themselves missing her. Shower upon them your gracious mercies which will bring tranquility to their souls.

Such tranquility springs from biblical principles which sustain, give strength, and provide the ability to endure. May the Holy Spirit empower each one to draw from this reservoir of confidence, enabling each to keep his eyes focused on the Source of all good and perfect gifts, our Lord Jesus Christ. Opal was indeed a good gift, now made perfect in Him.

There is no substitute for victory. There can be no victory without Christ, a victory that was won through His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross and made available to all through faith alone in Him.

Opal, Your child, is victorious. From her home on April 18, 2007, You ushered her into the realm of Your eternal glory about which we are confident and for which we are grateful. Thank you for allowing us to know, enjoy, and learn from this magnificent heroine of grace.

And we lift our prayer in the name of Your uniquely-born Son, namely, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Jude 24 - Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

v. 25 - to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forevermore! Amen.

