

A Warm Welcome

By David A. Sargent

When John Todd, a nineteenth-century [minister], was six years old, both of his parents died. A kind-hearted aunt raised him until he left home to study for the ministry. Later, this aunt became seriously ill, and in distress she wrote Todd a letter. "Would death mean the end of everything, or could she hope for something beyond?" Here, condensed from The Autobiography of John Todd, is the letter he sent in reply:

It is now thirty-five years since I, as a boy of six, was left quite alone in the world. You sent me word you would give me a home and be a kind mother to me. I have never forgotten the day I made the long journey to your house. I can still recall my disappointment when, instead of coming for me yourself, you sent your servant, Caesar, to fetch me.

I remember my tears and anxiety as, perched high on your horse and clinging tight to Caesar, I rode off to my new home. Night fell before we finished the journey, and I became lonely and afraid. "Do you think she'll go to bed before we get there?" I asked Caesar.

"Oh no!" he said reassuringly, "She'll stay up for you. When we get out o' these here woods, you'll see her candle shinin' in the window."

Presently we did ride out into the clearing, and there, sure enough, was your candle. I remember you were waiting at the door, that you put your arms close about me — a tired and bewildered little boy. You had a fire burning on the hearth, a hot supper waiting on the stove. After supper you took me to my new room, heard me say my prayers, and then sat beside me till I fell asleep.

Some day soon God will send for you, to take you to a new home. Don't fear the summons, the strange journey, or the messenger of death. God can be trusted to do as much for you as you were kind enough to do for me so many years ago. At the end of the road you will find love and a welcome awaiting, and you will be safe in God's care. *

The words of John Todd reflect the hope that one has in Christ.

The Apostle Paul was a Roman prisoner not knowing the outcome of his impending trial. He considered the possibilities (please read Philippians 1:21-24). If he were acquitted, then he could continue to serve God. If he were to be given the death penalty, then he would look forward to going to heaven to be with Christ, "which is far better."

Eternal life beyond the grave with God in heaven — this is the eternal hope of a Christian.

That hope is a living hope, because Jesus died for our sins on the cross, was buried, and He rose again.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade -- kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5 NIV).

God will save and give eternal life to those who place their faith and trust in Jesus (Acts 16:30-31), turn from their sins in repentance (Acts 17:30-31), confess Jesus before men (Romans 10:9-10), and are baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). He will continue to cleanse from sin and prepare for heaven those who continue to walk in the light of His Word (1 John 1:7-9).

A warm welcome awaits the child of God in the resurrection.

Won't YOU accept God's offer of salvation, sonship, and eternal life?

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* As quoted by Vernon Grounds, www.bible.org