

“HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH”

**A Tribute to Douglas Ray Still
(Oct. 16, 1955 – June 17, 1969).**

“He being dead yet speaketh”. These words are found in the Bible (Hebrews 11:4). They refer to Abel, the son of Adam and Eve. The entire verse reads: **“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh”.**

Here is one of the most unusual and thought provoking verses in the Bible. It is significant to note that Abel was the very first person to experience physical death. For him was conducted the world’s first funeral and was prepared the world’s first grave. No human being has been dead longer, yet he still speaks.

Let us further observe that Abel lived in the most remote and primitive epoch of human history. There were no libraries or books. No written records were kept. He was dead at least 2,500 years before Moses was born, yet he still speaks.

It is utterly incredible that one little voice could be heard so long. It defies the imagination that the voice of a lonely shepherd could echo down the corridors of human history for over 6,000 years and yet be heard above the grinding wheels of industry, the shouts and tumults of war, and the roar of interplanetary rockets. Righteous Abel still speaks. His influence remains to inspire and challenge the inhabitants of every century.

Once this strange truth is perceived it becomes applicable to every person who ever lived. The influence of the human life does not end at death. There is something about a man that can never be concealed in a casket or hidden in a hearse. The personality of the human soul will inevitably leave indelible marks upon society. Memories are not buried in the ground, they linger for years in the minds of friend and foe alike. Even an infant who dies at birth leaves a lasting impression on the living. The longer a person lives the more lives he will touch and the more lasting will be his memory.

Sometimes a person has even greater influence after death. The world’s most famous prophets were seldom famous until after their martyrdom. Abel himself spoke to only a few while living, now he speaks to millions. We probably know more about Columbus than did his contemporaries. John Paul Jones was scarcely thought of for a century. The Pilgrims died lonely and rejected. Memories of a life are not easily dissipated. Some may have a more lasting influence than others, but all men have influence.

Influence is felt not only while we are alive, but also after we are dead. McCormick still roams the wheat fields. Edison lingers to light the streets and lanes at eventide. Fulton stalks the face of the deep. Hitler haunts the homes of Germany. Stalin frowns in every political meeting in Moscow. Lincoln still raises his voice in defense of the oppressed. These men are gone, but they are not forgotten. We cannot begin anew and divest ourselves of history. They are dead, yet they speak.

Recently a young man named Doug Still has touched the heart strings of our community. His life, like that of Abel, was simple, righteous and obscure. A year ago he was but one of a faceless

multitude. There was little about him to distinguish him from thousands of American boys in their early teens.

Suddenly, Doug was faced with the burden of a terminal illness. A rare type of cancer found its way into the vital organs of his body. Each month that hurried by brought new pain and suffering, yet only a few were aware that anything serious was wrong. Doug filled his life with wholesome Christian activity and told his parents not to worry. He was regular in Christian worship. He attended Christian Service Camp in the summer and school in the fall.

Doug was faced with a fatal illness, yet he refused to complain or seek sympathy. Neighbors have seen him throwing papers or mowing the lawn with a mammoth cancer hanging on his neck. Doctors and nurses confirm the incredible fact that he was not afraid to die. He spoke of his Christian conviction that before him was a better land where there would be no suffering, tears, or pain. He assured his friends and relatives with his faith and asked them not to worry.

The months of suffering are now over. There will be no more sleepless nights and nauseating drugs. There will be no more burning fever, convulsions and pain. Doug is at home with the Lord.

Righteous Abel did not speak with his lips, he spoke with the eloquence of a righteous life. Doug speaks to us now in much the same way. He is gone, but he is not forgotten. The influence of his life lives on.

Many would picture America as a riot torn and divided country, but Doug will remind us that in time of physical need and human suffering, we will stand together as one. We will hold up our head and remember hundreds of letters, cards, gifts and prayers. We will remember a community that wept while a teen age boy suffered in silence.

Doug will have something to say to every parent. He will help us never to take our children for granted. He will remind us to raise our sons and daughters to know the Lord. We will think of him and put forth the extra effort to have our families in the House of God.

Doug also has a message for the Sunday School teacher. His life is a stunning incentive to take such a job seriously. We will think of him as we remember that even little boys and girls need to be taught courage in the face of adversity and suffering. Lessons about death and judgement, heaven and hell will assume a new and pertinent position in the lessons that are taught.

The ears of our youth will hear his voice and blush with embarrassment for complaining about anything. They will assume a new maturity and consideration of others.

He will be heard in hospitals bringing solace and courage to the sick and dying.

He will be heard in the school rooms and in the factories. He will speak to some on vacations and to others in the quietness of the night. Some will try to forget him but will not be able. He is gone but he is not forgotten.

Some will think of him and reinvest their treasures where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.

Perhaps we will see in Doug a little of ourselves. We will foresee the hour of our own decease. We will face the certainty of our own suffering and pain. We will smile at his eloquent reminder that we do not need to be afraid of death.

There is nothing solitary in our entire realm of experience. Not even a blade of grass or a grain of sand can be removed without affecting its environment. Abel was removed from our earth over 6,000 years ago but the world has never forgotten.

Nor can we forget a young Christian named Doug Still, for he being dead, yet speaketh.