

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH OF DEMENTIA AND ALZHEIMER'S PATIENTS

By Duane E. Starkey

For many years I have been concerned about the Christian Faith of dementia and Alzheimer's patients. The awareness of gradual loss of memory and ability to recall is ever present in these patients and their families. Oftentimes this is accompanied by depression and anxiety as they become aware of the illness and its debilitating effect on mind and emotions.

This failure of cognitive functions may be occasioned with bursts of anger and cursing by the patient. They may commit acts of physical violence and indecent body exposure as they lose control of their emotions. In the earlier stages of the illness, these events are lapses and as memory returns, the individual will experience regret and shame. Guilt takes advantage of this situation to create doubt and fear in their souls. Many of these Senior Christians begin to believe that God has forgotten them in their old age or fear that they are losing their salvation as they lose their memory of God. During their Christian experience, their souls have been comforted by the Word of God and sharing His Love in their lives. Remembering the scriptures, hymns and fellowship enabled them to maintain faith and sustain them in troubled times. Now that they no longer have this support in their souls, how can faith, hope and love be preserved in them?

This created a major cause of concern in me to find a solution to help these failing saints. Bible study, church attendance, prayer meetings and fellowship comforted their souls through the gradual decline of memory, but I had no answer to the question as to **what happens when they are no longer able to comprehend or remember their salvation in their minds?**

My concern for my fellow elders is a major burden for me. My job is to help and care for these beautiful sheep of God. How can I possibly comfort them and their families and strengthen their faith in God through Christ Jesus my Lord and Master?

Today, August first in the year twenty eleven, as I was in prayer for these saints, I received the answer from God. The Lord said, **"My sheep will hear my voice. They are born in the spirit with MY SPIRIT and no man can pluck them out of my hand. My word is Spirit and Truth and when you speak my word to them, their spirit will hear the truth that I will preserve them from sin and death".**

Now our job is to make this truth known to the seniors and their families. God's Spirit through our spirit speaks to their spirits. They hear and receive comfort and love even when their minds do not show evidence of it. **They still hear the Voice of God and they cannot be lost because they belong to God.**

Praise God. This is good news for everyone because sooner or later they will be seniors too. Let us be comforted with this knowledge and strengthened for the trials to come.

May the **Grace of God and His Love be with you.**

Amen

