

The Story of Two - New Life and Death

The hands of time turn life events into history. In the urgency of life, unrehearsed, history turns into faded memories. Faded memories are distorted and often forgotten but how can we forget this story? How can we forget the story of two? This is the story of one who should not have lived and one who should not have died so soon.

One Who Should Not Have Lived

This story begins in December 1941 in a small town in Upper Egypt called El Baliana. There a mother in her 40's was expecting again. She was well accustomed to pregnancies. She had had 10 pregnancies before this one. She had three stillbirth and seven living children. The youngest child, a five-year-old girl, was slightly retarded. Medical professionals tell us that late life pregnancies bring risks of abnormality and ill health. Yet with anticipation this Mother was expecting another unplanned child. Unlike other pregnancies, this one was exceptionally difficult and painful.

This pregnancy had been problematic from the start. Severe nausea and sickness overwhelmed this 43-year-old mother. The small built woman was unable to retain food, drink or receive any nourishment. During the four months of pregnancy her weight had dropped to less than 70 pounds. For some time the doctors had been advising an abortion. In spite of the insistence of medical consultants and family members, the godly woman and her husband refused to have an abortion. Believing in the sanctity of life and the sovereignty of God they were willing to endure this hardship and whatever risks this pregnancy might bring.

December 31st 1941 was a very difficult day. Doctors gathered from surrounding towns. The doctors advised that the life of mother was at great risk and the life of the baby was

questionable at best. They warned of dire health complications and negative consequences to the life of the mother. They persistently recommended an abortion to save the mother of seven children.

The couple asked for twenty-four hours to consider the decision. They needed time to pray for wisdom and for the Lord's leading. They were told that 24 hours was the most they would be granted.

The father with a close friend spent all the night in prayer. By sunrise he had made his decision. His wife's life should be spared. The doctors confirmed that this was the proper approach. The couple was told that the abortion procedure was simple and effective. One strong saline injection would lead to the baby's death. A stillbirth would follow within 24 hours.

The ailing mother reluctantly accepted the counsel of the doctors and the request of her husband. The deadly saline ejection was administered. The waiting period began. Twenty-four hours passed. There was no sign of change. Forty-eight hours passed and the baby was still alive and kicking and no stillbirth. The doctors recommended another application of the deadly saline injection. Another injection would surely do the job.

The couple strongly rejected the request of the doctors. Even the advice of the husband's brother who was a leading doctor in the community could not change their mind. Believing that the sovereignty of God must prevail they trusted their life to His loving care. **"God is the only one who has authority to give life or take it away,"** they said.

Miraculously, the mother's health began to improve. She began to retain some fluid and gain some strength. As she was able to retain some food the nausea and sickness were diminishing and her health was being restored.

Time passed on and the pregnancy seems to take a normal course. There were still some concerns about the health and life of this unborn child. Pregnancies for older women are risky at the best of times. What damage could the deadly saline injection have caused to this unborn child? This was beyond any medical projections. Yet in faith the couple trusted God to rule as He may choose.

On May 25th 1942 a healthy boy was born. This boy was the eleventh of his brothers and sisters. Three children were stillborn and eight were alive in this small town in Upper Egypt. To name the child his parents wrote five names on folded papers. They placed these papers on a platter and lit a candle beside each name. The candle that lasted the longest would indicate the name this child would have. This might be a reflection of the child's persistence before his birth. The candle that lasted the longest had the name Baha.

That is what they named this boy. Typing this story I am this boy. This is my story - almost forgotten even by me. Typing this now is for the record so the experiences of my faithful parents should not be forgotten. I am recording this so that their faith may challenge our life values and priorities.

These days where the life of the unborn is a disposable commodity, this is the story of one who should not have lived. I am the one who should not have lived. I am the child who in 1968 had the privilege of bringing his mother to Canada where she lived and was cared for during the last six years of her life.

This is the story of one who was given life in spite of death. This is the story of a faithful mother and father who accepted God's sovereignty in spite of pain - people who accepted God's will and plans though they could not understand.

The Story of One Who Should Not Have Died So Soon

The second half of this story takes place in the same town and in the same home where I was born. The father was very sick. Yes, this was the story of my father, a hard workingman respected by all who knew him. My father was a godly businessman whose life motto was one word - a word engraved on the brass paperweight sitting on his desk. The one word motto was "**OTHERS**". Yes, he lived his life in the service of others.

This good businessman served many in the community and provided well for his family. He fell gravely ill with a disease that was little known in those days. For most of his life he enjoyed good health. He struggled with a very common addiction that enslaved many in that part of the world. This was the addiction of smoking. He tried to overcome that addiction many times. Life's pressures and the lack of community support seem to pull him back into the grip of this unhealthy, destructive habit.

In the same house where the doctors helped the ailing, pregnant mother, the doctors gathered once more. This time the faithful wife was caring for her gravely ill husband. Once more the doctors stood perplexed and helpless. The sudden and severe intestinal pain was far beyond the doctors' diagnostic abilities. Experienced doctors were called in from far away places but all their knowledge could not bring increased hope. Once more, in faith, the family trusted the sovereignty of a wise God who has the power to give life and the power to take it away.

A few weeks before falling sick this healthy good man confided in his eldest son, Makram, that he felt that his days on earth were short. He asked him to discontinue his university studies and prepare to take care of the family and the family business. This is how Makram recalls these events:

Mid October 1943 brought a great surprise. I was in my university residence when Father dropped by for a visit. Father often came to Cairo on business and a visit to his university

son was always a must. He often came to support, and encourage me in my medical studies. A little extra spending money was often a welcomed parting gift.

This visit was different. It was not a visit of encouragement. It was not a visit of support. Father came with special and strange request.

“I would like you to drop out of medical school”, father said. “I would like you come to our small town and help me in business”.

“You do not need my help”, I said “You are successful and you have done very well in business. You always encouraged me to study. I do not want to leave my medical school”.

“Would you consider going to a business school?” said father.

“No, I want to become a doctor like my uncle,” said Makram.

“I believe I am going to need your help,” said Father.

“You have always done very well; you care for all of us and you do not need my help”, replied Makram emphatically.

The fifty four year old father left his nineteen-year-old son to ponder these strange words. He left to return few minutes later with a more insistent request.

“I want you to come home to El Baliana to help me. I do not feel very well. I do not believe I have much time to live. I want to prepare you to take of the family”, said Father.

Father left to take the train home while Makram pondered these harsh words. These are words that are difficult for anyone to take. Such words are overwhelming for a teenager in his first year at a far away university town. In disbelief Makram had to grapple with these words and what they could mean.

This was early December 1943. Forty days later Makram received an urgent telegram. *“Come home as soon as you can. Your father’s life is in danger”.*

Makram left his university residence never to return. At forty-five years of age our good father knew his time on earth was coming to an end. He knew that he soon would meet his Lord and Maker. He wanted to prepare for his departure in every way he could. In spite of his pain and illness he instructed Makram on all outstanding matters. Makram was told of undocumented business loans that should be paid back. Father instructed that long-term commitments he made must be fulfilled. He highlighted family roles that must be respected.

Now he was lying in bed realizing the hour of his departure was coming close. This courageous man called his wife and his eight children to his bedside. One by one they knelt by his bed. He put his hand on their head as he gave them each special instruction and a special blessing. He admonished them to support and care for each other. To his faithful wife he assured her that God would provide for the heavy burden she will carry.

Occasionally he would speak of heavenly visions that he could see. He spoke of Christ’s beauty, singing and light that seem to wait for his arrival. He quoted scripture verses to those who stood by his bed. 180 verses someone counted. These were solemn moments. A sacred hush filled the room as all felt as if they were facing the gates of heaven.

This is how an Egyptian newspaper reported this event. His friend, Rev. Tawifk Gayed, wrote this in the El Hoda newspaper¹.

“On the 13th of January 1944 a lovely tree was transplanted from ElBaliana Egypt to the glorious gardens of heaven. Our dear friend, Mishriky, was a tall palm tree and grew like the majestic cedars of Lebanon. He blossomed in the earthly house of the Lord. He was transplanted to be near the Tree Of Life, which gives its fruit in seasons, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.

¹ This is an extraction and paraphrase not literal translation.

My relationship with my departing friend has grown over the past twenty years. The more I knew him the more I cherished him. Many tried to express their appreciation of his character. His enemies expressed reluctantly the same complimenting opinions as his friends and admirers.

Would you consider his personality? He was bright and intelligent, careful with his words and wise in his counsel.

Would you consider his friendship? You would find him faithful in times of need and loyal even when brothers prove to be untrue.

Would you consider his family? You cannot help but sing the praises of the wonderful household.

Would you consider him in his church? God would provide him as an example for the best in the church. Whether it is in his gentle presence, insight and Christ like-mindedness. He debated any wrong counsel and opposed any deviation from the Truth.

Would you consider him in his finances? Whatever he owned was not his own. If there was a ministry project he was always giving. The hungry he always fed. The poor and the homeless he always took in. For those who had no clothes he always provided. He embodied the saying that the true wealth is the memories left behind.

If I forget all of this I would not forget what he did before his death. Those who were around him saw in him a reflection of Jacob and Moses, the patriarchs of Israel. How he called his children and blessed them each according to his age and state of responsibility. The younger ones were blessed thorough the blessing of the older ones. In his final hours he regained some strength and as he blessed his children his pale face became more radiant. His words were filled with scripture.”

This is the loss of El Baliana and the loss of church. What a blessing he has been during his life and even at his death. Our memories of him will not be limited to what he has left behind but are stretched to what awaits him in glory. He helped our eyes observe the glory of Christ and the radiance of the almighty Lord. There he will shine, not in an earthly manner, but in a manner that will not fade eternally.

So to the family, to the church and myself I say, let us look all of us to the one who said “I will replace their ashes with beauty and their mournful spirit with a song of praise.”

Another writer Mr. Hanna Atteia wrote in the same paper:

“He was in a sick bed for almost a month without the ability to see anyone but fourteen hours before his death he became quite alert. He spent this time blessing members of his family and giving them instructions. He instructed them concerning their responsibilities towards the house of the Lord.

He called his two oldest sons and put their hands together and gave them special instructions towards the care of God’s ministry. He instructed them as to the importance of keeping close to each other and to Christ. He told them that as a youngster his father took him to church and he stayed close to Christ ever since. He instructed them to follow in the path of his fathers and grandfathers.

When he finished blessing all his children and his wife he asked his brother, Rev. Saif Habashy, to sing “ The Lord Is My Shepherd” followed by “Abide With Me”. Then he asked him to pray.

Then he looked at all those around him and recited Bible verses starting with “I know whom I have believed.” After moments of silence he raised his hand towards heaven, smiled and his soul left him towards the heavens.

Truly a man with such a life and such a glorious ending is surely in the heavens with the saints. In this those who love him will find comfort and from his life find a great example."

On January 13, 1944 my father passed away. Grief and sorrow filled the house and neighboring town. People came from all over the country to pay respects and offer their help. The extended family rallied around my grieving mother and her eight children. Expressions of love became a cornerstone in facing the challenging future ahead.

One Friend, Faithful unto Death

In the day when people's minds were focused on funeral plans and hurting children a black dog that was faithful to his master could not be found. He had been grieving during his master's illness. He seemed to know their friendship would soon come to an end. That dog had a unique ability of predicting the return of my father from his business trips. He would anxiously bark for hours before the arrival of the train bringing my father from his business travel. This time he seems to predict the departure of his master on his final trip. In grieving over his ill master he would seldom eat or drink.

This faithful dog followed the funeral procession to the church and then to the burial place. Returning home he refused to enter the

house. Refusing to eat or drink he spent many lonely days. Finally, his frail body gave way to his own mortality. That was the story of my father's little black dog whose name we have all forgotten but the memories of his faithfulness still remain.

This is the story of my father, Mishriky Habashy. This story has almost drifted into a forgotten history. This is the story of one who should not have died so early - one who in his short life left a legacy that impacted many lives. He left a model of values and faithfulness to the end. This is the story of a man whose life I wish I could emulate.

The story of one who should not have lived and one who should not have died so soon are written to provide a record of God's sovereignty. This record may be imperfect but its truth is the root of a heritage that would be valuable to this and the coming generations.

The story is not finished because my father and my mother are still alive - alive in glory with the Lord God they loved. They are alive in the lives they influenced and the values they instilled in those they touched.

Yes, they are alive waiting to be joined by faithful children and grandchildren in a wonderful eternal home - a home where there will be no more sickness, pain or death.

*Life with all its glory has nothing to compare
with what awaits for us up there.
Our hope is in our coming reunions .*