

BOOTSIE'S MEMORIAL SERVICE

REMARKS BY

AARON CLARKE (GRANDSON)

For anyone who doesn't know me, I'm Bootsie's grandson, RussDickRandAaron.

I knew she'd want me to share something with you at this time, so I asked Grandma shortly before she died about her favorite scriptures. Her first response was to mention Isaiah chapter 53. It's a prophecy from the Old Testament, written many centuries before Jesus of Nazareth was born, but it described the brutal death He would one day suffer on a cross as payment for the sins of the world. Here's a portion, verses 4 through 6:

4 Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

There's a certain directness in Grandma's response to my question: she wanted to cut right to the chase and make sure that anyone here would hear a very concise Gospel message: Jesus Christ died for your sins. And mine. And Grandma's. But that's not the end of the Gospel message; even though the passage in Isaiah is fixated on the suffering of Christ as He gave his life, and even though death is a natural cadence point in one's existence, (evidenced by the fact that we're all gathered here today to celebrate Grandma's life in this memorial service), death is by no means an end. Half of the Gospel message is that Jesus died for your sins, and the other half is that he rose again, and you will too. Make no mistake: you will live on after death. And you will meet Jesus Christ. It will either be a joyful

experience or a terrible one. But I have no doubt whatsoever and I am utterly convinced that if you place your faith in Christ to save you, He will indeed do just that. My faith, and that of my Grandma, is not based on a future event that may perhaps occur. Isaiah's faith was. So was Abraham's and Moses' and Noah's and all the other Old Testament prophets and so-called "heroes of the faith." For a couple thousand years, the writers of the Bible were forecasting what would happen at some point in their future. But about two thousand years ago, there was an inflection point in history. Jesus Christ was born of a virgin in Bethlehem, exactly as it was predicted. He grew wise and strong and performed many miracles, again exactly as predicted, and after His brief ministry, on a certain day in history, He was murdered by a tyrannical government at the behest of an insane, angry mob. Exactly as predicted. And then He rose again from that death on the third day and spent another seven weeks with his followers before He flew away into Heaven. These things happened. In the last words of Jesus himself on the cross, "It is finished." From where we sit, we have a couple thousand years of scholarship and church history to attest to the authenticity of these events, and it's up to us to consider this evidence carefully and make our choice to either accept the free gift of salvation through the grace of God, or to reject it and take our own chances at making our own way to Heaven. I don't know about you, but I disappoint myself on a very regular basis, so I imagine I don't have a lot to offer to an Almighty God that He really needs from me. Thankfully, the only thing He really wants is our trust that he already paved the way for us to follow Him, and to acknowledge Him as Lord. A passage, one of my favorites, from Paul's letter to the church at Rome is inside your memorial service brochure:

Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

That's about as simply as I've found it stated in the Bible. I know that someday, probably very soon from the look of things in the world, I'll be able to see my Grandma again, and I'm certain of it not because of anything I've ever done or would be able to do, nor anything Grandma did or could do, for that matter. But because of what God already did (as in, past tense!) for me. That same certainty is available to you. His name is Jesus Christ. The Bible is full of promises made to those who trust in God and his Son Jesus. I've been reading the book of Revelation a lot lately because it's cheaper than a newspaper subscription. In the

beginning of that book, Jesus makes a series of statements to the seven churches of Asia Minor. After each of the first three of these, a specific promise is given to those who "have ears to hear" and "those who overcome". I'd like to end by pointing out a specific passage to you. In chapter 2 verse 17, Jesus gives this strange promise of three items:

17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."

I have to imagine that among all the other magnificent promises given in scripture, this one must have really stood out to my grandmother; I can't fathom how appealing a 'new name' would have been to a young girl named Beulah.