

The Great Leveling Ground

by Lois Baldwin Southern, D.C.

I looked around me at the circle of people. An elderly woman sat with her slip at least six inches below her dress hem line, drooling and her eyes fixed in a blank stare. I was curious about her life and found that she was a retired school principal, a literary genius who had published a book.

Next to her sat a lady, her clothes disheveled, and food still on her face from lunch a few hours earlier, but she still had a sparkle in her eye. As I engaged in conversation with her, I found she was formerly a nurse who taught in a university.

Next, I noticed a man who appeared to be about sixty years of age, who sat and glared, but said nothing. I ate with him at the lunch table, and he would sit and stare at his food until someone fed him the first bite; then, he went after it as if he were starving. The lady who fed him was a former employee and told me that he had been a bank president; but Alzheimer's had struck, and now he was no longer able to function, even to take care of himself. Another gentleman, the victim of a stroke, was friendly and smiling, but unable to speak so he could be understood. He was tied to a catheter and unable to walk. He had been this way for 14 years. Formerly, he was the manager of a large building firm and on the board of trustees of a prominent bank.

I have had occasion to spend the past one-and-a-half years observing hundreds of patients in different nursing homes. Some are from poor, underprivileged backgrounds; some were at the top in educational endeavors; some were geniuses in science; others were considered to be at the top in the business world, applauded in the musical world, or successful in the health fields, including chiropractic. However, as I looked at this menagerie of humanity, I was somewhat startled to realize that all of them looked and acted pretty much the same. I couldn't tell the educated from the uneducated, the rich from the poor, the successful from the failure in the business world. I find there is a great lesson in this circumstance for all of us. I know most younger people won't even visit a nursing home because it is just too depressing. You are right, young people, it is depressing, but try to get beyond the depression and look for the lesson you have pictured before you. What are you trying to do today? Probably most of you would say "trying to get ahead". We want our kids to have the best education. We want to live in the best neighborhood, go to the best schools, attend the churches that have programs to entertain our kids. Could it be possible that we have our emphasis in the wrong place? It doesn't make any difference how much money you have, how successful you are in business or how many plaques you have for public achievement. They are all worthless when you reach the "great leveling ground". So where should your emphasis be? Should we just give up and live the life of a bum because we lose it all in the end? Well, that doesn't seem very smart either. Some of those people in nursing homes acted as if they didn't have a thought in their mind; but God says in I Peter 1:24-25: "All flesh is as grass, And all the

glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever".

Once it's in your mind, it's there to stay, even if you can't recall it just when you want to. Your relationship with Him never changes from His standpoint. He's still there and when no one else can understand what you are trying to say, He can. It seems to me the most important thing to do would be to spend our entire life trying to learn more of God's Word, spending more time with Him while we still have our wits about us. When we are isolated and have no one but Him to talk to, it will then be a natural transition. It might be a bit difficult to adjust to talking to only one Person for the rest of your life when you haven't spent any time talking to Him before. Who knows what sort of intimate conversation may be going on behind those vacant stares? This may be a time which is precious both to them and their best friend, Jesus. However, what could be going on behind the vacant stares of those who do not know Jesus or who don't know Him well enough to speak intimately with Him? This could be much worse than living the life of a bum. There will be no comfort in past achievements, because you won't be able to remember them. Don't think that because you have enough money to buy the best long-term care policy the insurance industry has to offer, you will be treated any better than the man sitting next to you who is on Medicaid. This is the land of equality in its stark reality. The only long-term care policy which pays off at this time is that which you have in Christ. I do believe if we will put Jesus first, in everything we do - that includes our thought life, our free time and our business and church life - that where we stand on the scale of "success" will begin to fall into place. Don't waste all that time trying to be the best, the most popular and the richest. Do your best to know Him, and He will take care of your business and social standards. He will lead you to those seminars you need, not so you can make money, but so you can glorify Him. It may be with meager income; that's for Him to decide. Our whole life, including our practices, is but a brief span. God's Word makes this evident in: II Cor. 4:16-17, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.." and, Psalm 144:4 "Man is like a breath, His days are like a passing shadow," but when this life ends, the next one is for eternity. Start preparing for that now. Wouldn't it be great to be spending so much time in prayer that the Lord would be apt to call you home right in the middle of a sentence while you are talking to Him. Wow! Talk about a quick answer to prayer.