A Talk About Death—And Life

The SATURDAY REPORT

What's it like when you're told that you have terminal cancer, from three to six months to live? How does one look to life?

That's what happened in this interview with the Rev. W. E. Abrams, 79, a Baptist minister who has been a fighter for more than 50 years. His name is Henry, a fighter. He has had cancer for more than 40 years and he knows what the experience is like.

Mr. Abrams, who lives in Belmont, has one son, Bert W. Abrams of Charlotte. Two daughters, Mrs. Troy White, Arkansas, and Mrs. Emma Jean Henderson, Belmont, nine grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. His wife of 50 years died in 1970.

Mr. Abrams agreed to this interview because he said he wanted to tell as many people as possible that they need not dread death, that instead of the Christian there is no death.

Question: You say you think there's no death for a Christian, what do you believe happens?

Answer: I've never been able to think or even suspect that I'm going to die. I know I'm going to stop out of this body of clay and into a new body — but I can't believe this in dying, I'm just going from one place to another.

I know that when I go I'll look back on this day whatever I've done in life, good memories but I also know that there'll be in a far greater and better place. I don't dread death. You could say that I'm looking forward to it — as able to bring my wife, my friends and relatives.

Q. What do you think heaven will be like?
A. I expect to see me. As I said, my wife, friends and relatives. And I expect to see people looking for them, from when they died, husbands and wives looking for each other. I know it will be a place of great beauty and they'll talk about the same things. Or whether our joy will be so great that we'll not return to earthly things. I think we'll be in a new condition and fellowship with each other.

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Q. How do you go about it?
A. As I said, I expect to see me. As I said, my wife, friends and relatives. And I expect to see people looking for them, husbands and wives looking for each other. I know it will be a place of great beauty and they'll talk about the same things. Or whether our joy will be so great that we'll not return to earthly things. I think we'll be in a new condition and fellowship with each other.

How is it possible to approach such beauty with a feeling of dread?

Q. Have you always had a faith so strong?
A. When I was younger, I looked at death differently. I mean everybody does. I didn't.
worry about whether I'll be saved. I know I'll be saved. But I worry about having my family, my young children. But now they've all put on their own and this is so very serious for me. But I still have to leave them — because I love them so much.

Q. What would you say to other persons who might have a moral issue and who might not look forward to death without one attitude as you have?

A. I'll try to explain to them that there is a world to come, that there is a place of punishment and a place of rest and that they should make preparations for going to that place of rest.

Q. How are preparations made?

A. You can find it right in the Scriptures in Christ's words: Believe in Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. I think the key word is "believe." That involves a commitment — a commitment to follow His leadership and His guidance.

It says it in the fifth chapter of Romans, verses 6-9, where Paul is trying to convince Roman sinners in Christ:

"For salvation that comes from trusting Christ — which is unlike any preaching — is already within easy reach of us; in fact, it is as near as our own hearts and mouths."

"For if you call on Christ with your own mouth to whom Christ is your Lord, and believe in your own heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

"For it is by believing in his heart that a man becomes right with God, and with his mouth he tells others of his faith, confirming his salvation."

THE REV. W. E. AHABBS:...so very simple...

Q. Is it as simple as that?

A. That's what I asked about 40 years ago — the same question. I was 14 years old, a boy with deep conviction, but I was confused. I wanted to know the Lord, but I didn't know how to go about it.

I came into the kitchen one night, and the Lord said, "Wash and make your bed." I did it. And that night, I prayed, "And I prayed: 'Oh, Lord, direct me to the message from you that I need most.'"

Well, two weeks later he was killed in a car accident. I'm afraid I committed the unpardonable sin, I think He did that to the threshold of salvation only once and if you willfully reject Him, you're damned forever. So you must turn your back on God, and I don't believe you get another chance.

It's hard for me to understand how a person could do this to God, but I know He has power to save. In a nation where some husbands and wives fighting and each wanting their own way, I know of only one way people can end this fighting and live together in peace.

Q. And what's that one way?

A. To get right with the Lord. If you're right with the Lord, your relationship with other people will be right too.
A. That's what I asked about 20 years ago — that same question. I was 14 years old, a boy with deep conviction, but I was confused. I wanted to know the Lord, but I didn't know how to go about it.

I came into the kitchen one day and Maw — I always called my mother Maw — was washing dishes. I said, "Maw, how can I find the Lord?"

Well, she stopped, picked up her Bible and read to me these three verses out of Romans. I said: "Is that all there is to it?" And she said: "It's right there in the Lord's words.

It was so plain and simple I hardly could accept it. I struggled with it in bed. Can it be so simple? Finally, at about 2 o'clock, the light came and it was been with me ever since. And it really is very plain and simple.

Q. Do you think a person ever reaches a point in his life when it's too late to commit to Christ?

A. There's a difference of opinion on this. You'll find as many opinions as you'll find people. But the Bible speaks of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. It says blasphemy against man can be forgiven — in this world or in the world to come.

Q. What is this sin?

A. Few agree on exactly what it is. But most believe there is more than one way to commit it. However, I think the way it most often is committed is when a person is

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Q. Do you pray often?

A. All my life I've tried to place myself in the will of God. And this hasn't changed since my doctor told me I was going to die. I didn't ask the Lord for an extension of time. I didn't ask Him to heal me. My prayer was: "Lord, your will be done." This is the only prayer I have prayed since, the only prayer I contemplate praying.

Q. If you could go back and live your life over again, would you change anything?

A. I don't know of a single change I'd make under the same circumstances. I always tried to do the best I could and that's what I'd try to do again. I always enjoyed my work as a minister. There is no greater thanks a man can have than to preach the word of God and see people accept His plan of salvation as offered.

In my years as a minister I counseled a good many people. And so many of them had the same problem: Stubbornness. They didn't want to give in.

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Rev. Abrams, Unafraid Or Death, Dies At 80

BY DARRYL SIFFORD

A 90-year-old pastor who was admired by many as a spiritual leader in Charlotte, Rev. W. E. Abrams, died on Sunday, April 4, 1970. The service will be held on Wednesday, April 7, at 11 a.m. at the Greater Emmanuel Baptist Church in Charlotte.

Abrams, who was born in 1880, had been a pastor for over 60 years. He was known for his wisdom and his ability to comfort and inspire his congregation.

Abrams had been in poor health for some time, and his family had been praying for his recovery. But on Sunday morning, April 4, 1970, Rev. Abrams passed away peacefully in his sleep.

Rev. Abrams leaves behind a legacy of love and faith that will be remembered by all who knew him. His spirit will live on in the hearts of those he touched with his words and his actions.
still are some things He wants me to do for Him. My vocabulary is not sufficient to describe the miracle that I believe has taken place."

After publication of the deathbed interview a year ago, Abrams said he received letters from newspaper readers in more than 20 states, some of whom said they formed around-the-clock prayer groups to pray for his recovery.

Nearing this, Abrams said: "Maybe this is the Lord’s way of showing that prayers are answered. Maybe this is His way of strengthening somebody else’s faith. These people around the country kept praying for my healing in the face of death. Maybe the Lord spared my life to increase their faith.”

Abrams, in the interview, talked about death: "When you are so near death’s door, you look forward to what you’re going to find — and enjoy — on the other side. I anticipated meeting loved ones and friends, my wife, my parents, who’ve been gone for 40 years."

"I anticipated grasping the nail-scarred hands of Christ, talking with the prophets, asking the apostle Paul how he endured "with enduring without complaining," asking Moses about his journey into the wilderness."

Abrams said he even expected, somehow, to meet the devil. About the devil he said: "I’ve never pictured, in my mind, the devil as an ugly being with horns and a long tail. To the contrary, I believe he’s one of the most attractive people you could find, intelligent, with a good personality. This is how he gets people to follow him. If he really looked the way he’s pictured, well, he’d never get any support."

As I left his modest brick home on that cool spring afternoon, Abrams smiled and asked: "Are you going to come back next year? I’ll still be here, you know."

In addition to his son, Hoyt, Abrams is survived by two daughters, Mrs. Troy A. White and Mrs. M. R. Henderson, both of Mount Holly; two brothers, Charles L. Abrams of Rutherfordton and Worth T. Abrams of Baltimore; and four sisters, Mrs. Ann Hill, Mrs. Ollie Miller, Miss Ida Abrams and Mrs. Ed Watson, all of Rutherfordton. Also surviving are nine grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

The funeral was scheduled this afternoon at Catawba Heights Baptist Church.
Rev. Watson Abrams of Catawba Heights, is shown here with three of his great-grandchildren as he celebrated his 80th birthday Friday. It was a good birthday for him because a year ago doctors told him he had only three or four months to live as he battled cancer. The children are, left to right, Kelly, Paul and Ron Baker.

Minister turns 80, beats the 'Big C'

A year ago, a doctor in Charlotte examined the Rev. Watson Abrams and gave him the bad news. "You've got cancer," he said, "and you're not going to live more than three or four months."

Abrams, a retired Baptist minister, was 79 years old. He came home to Catawba Heights and started getting his affairs in order. He knew he was going to die.

But the days turned into weeks, and the weeks into months, and Abrams started getting stronger. He lost weight because of the treatment, but he never gave up driving his car again.

Now he is 80. In fact, he celebrated his 80th birthday Friday at home, 288 Longview Drive, in Catawba Heights. He lives there alone. Two daughters live nearby.

"A miraculous," said the man who beat the "Big C." Abrams' daughter, Mrs. Troy White, invited a few friends to the house Friday night for the birthday celebration.

"I guess it's the happiest birthday I ever had," said the man who beat the "Big C"
two daughters, Mrs. Troy A. White and Mrs. M.H. Henderson, both of Mount Holly; two brothers, Charles L. Abrams, Rutherfordton, and Worth T. Abrams, Baltimore, Md.; four sisters, Mrs. Aline Hill, Mrs. Ollie Miller, Miss Ida Abrams and Mrs. Ed Watson, all of Rutherfordton; nine grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held Monday at 3 p.m., at the Catawba Heights Baptist Church with the Rev. Max Pendleton and the Rev. Mack Pressley officiating.

The body will lie in state for one hour prior to the services.

Honorary pallbearers are the Gaston Ministerial Association and the deacons of the Catawba Heights and Tuckasegee Baptist Churches. Carothers Funeral Home, Mount Holly, is in charge of arrangements.

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REV. WATSON EARL ABRAMS

MOUNT HOLLY — The Rev. Watson Earl Abrams, 80, of 238 Linbrook Dr., died at 10 a.m. Saturday at home.

Born in Rutherford County, he was the son of the late William G. and Cora Brooks Abrams and lived in Mount Holly for 26 years.

He entered the ministry in 1924 and retired in 1964.

In addition to pastoring at the Tuckasegee Baptist Church in Mount Holly, he pastored in Burke and Madison Counties in North Carolina, Marion, N.C., Nanjemoy, Md., Rutherfordton, and Glenwood, N.C., and Baltimore, N.C.

He retired from the Catawba Heights Baptist Church in Mount Holly.

He is survived by one son, Hoyt W. Abrams, Charlotte.
Rev. Abrams Dies

Rev. W. E. Abrams passed away at his home in Mount Holly, September 26. He had been in declining health for several years, but sudden death was a shock to his family and friends.

He was the son of the late William G. and Cora Brooks Abrams and lived in Mount Holly for 26 years. He entered the ministry in 1924 and retired in 1964.
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He retired from the Catawba Heights Baptist Church in Mount Holly.

He is survived by one son, Hoyt W. Abrams, Charlotte; two daughters, Mrs. Troy A. White and Mrs. M.H. Henderson, both of Mount Holly; two brothers, Charles L. Abrams, Rutherfordton, and Worth T. Abrams, Baltimore, Md.; four sisters, Mrs. Anne Hill, Mrs. Ollie Miller, Miss Ida Abrams and Mrs. Ed Watson, all of Rutherfordton, nine grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Monday at 3 p.m. at the Catawba Heights Baptist Church with the Rev. Max Pendleton and the Rev. Mack Pressley officiating.

Burial was in Hillcrest Gardens Cemetery.

Honorary pallbearers were the Gaston Ministerial Association and the deacons of the Catawba Heights and Tuckasegee Baptist Churches.

Carothers Funeral Home, Mount Holly was in charge of the arrangements.

in the ministry for over 40 years, pastoring churches in several near by counties and in different parts of Maryland. His memory will ever live in the hearts of all who knew him.

He is survived by three children, Hoyt Abrams of Charlotte, Marcel White and Emma Jean Henderson of Mount Holly; two brothers Charles of Rutherfordton and Worth of Baltimore, Md.; four sisters, Mrs. Hicks Hill, Mrs. W. J. Miller, Miss Ida Abrams all of Rutherfordton and Mrs. E. M. Watson of Forest City, Route 3; nine grandchildren and nine great grandchildren also survive.

Funeral services were conducted at Catawba Heights Baptist Church Monday, Sept. 30 with his pastor, Rev. Mack Pressley. Dr. R. W. Abrams was in charge.

Burial was in Hillcrest Gardens in Mount Holly.