

## ONE SECOND FROM ETERNITY

By John F. Hall

A few days ago, I needed to go to Cadiz, Kentucky to find a night-light bulb. That type of bulb had burned out in my Nativity scene that I put in my foyer. I also need a replacement bulb for the baby Jesus that is in the Nativity scene on my front porch. I



I thought that the recently opened Family Dollar/Dollar Tree would have the replacement bulb that I needed. My wife, Paula needed instant glue to repair one of our Christmas decorations. I parked in the store parking lot and went inside. I asked an employee, stocking the shelves, the location of the replacement bulbs and the instant glue. She told me to follow her, and she would show me where those items are located. The store had the instant glue, but not the night-light bulbs that I needed. I purchased the instant glue and two regular lamp bulbs. I needed to stop at Hancock's Market to purchase grocery items so that Paula could make her homemade soup. I was stopped at the Highway 68/80 bypass intersection with Highway 68/80 Business road. I was waiting for the traffic light to change to green. I was looking up at the traffic light and looking at the westbound traffic lanes. The light changed to green, and I was about to push down on the gas pedal. Then I heard two quick truck horn blasts.

I looked out my driver's side window, and observed a semi-truck pulling a cattle trailer. It was full of cattle. The semi-truck was speeding and the trucker was trying to beat the red light. Had I pulled out, I would have been one second from eternity. My Ford Escape does not have side doors air bags. It would not have mattered. The side impact from a truck going more than 60 miles an hour would have killed me instantly. Upon impact, the semi-truck would have jack-knifed and turned over, and spilled cattle all over the intersection. Too many times, Divine intervention has saved me from being killed. I watched as the semi-truck sped through the intersection. The trucker waived and I saw his lips say, "Thank you." I had the right-of-way, but being dead right is not consolation. That highway almost became a Kentucky die-way for me. Nine months earlier, I was knocking on heaven's door, as my heart and my kidneys were failing. I struggling to even breathe. After two weeks in Baptist Health Hospital, I managed to survive, but my strength had deserted me, and my days of hard work were over.

Thomas Hardy wrote a poem called, "The To-Be-Forgotten." These are his words: "I heard a small sad sound, and stood awhile among the tombs around: "Wherefore, old friends," said I, "are you distressed, now screened from life's unrest?" Oh, not being here; but that our future second death is near; when, with the living, memory of us numbs, and blank oblivion comes! These, our sped ancestry, lie here embraced by deeper death than we; nor shape nor thought of these can you descry with keenest backward eye. They count as quite forgot; they are as men who have existed not; there is a loss of fitful breath; it is the second death. We have, as yet, each day is blest with dear recall; as yet, can say we hold in some soul loved continuance of shape and voice and glance. But what had been will be - first memory, then oblivion's swallowing sea; like men foregone, shall

we merge into those whose story no one knows. For which of us could hope to show in life that world-awaking scope granted the few whose memory none let's die, but all men magnify."

Inside Hancock's Market, I asked one of the employees to show me the location of black eye peas and Lima beans. This employee introduced me to Mr. Hancock. He began the grocery business in Princeton, Kentucky. He is in his early 80's. I told him that his granddaughter, Dru Thomas speaks highly of him. After paying for the groceries, I stopped at the owner's office. Mallory Lawrence was busy on the phone, so I talked to Misty Caldwell, another store employee. She was in high school with my son, John. Misty has a good sense of humor. She asked me how was I feeling. I usually tell people that I am old and decrepit. This time I told Misty that I felt like an old dog. She jokingly said: "Do we need to put you down? I told her, no, and that I still had a few "barks" in me. I believe that a little levity is good for the soul.

It seems rather obvious to me that the Good Lord is not yet ready to call this old writer home. Clay Harrison wrote a short piece called, "Mysterious Ways." These are his words: "Your ways are so amazing, Lord, it brings me to my knees, for miracles still happen in troubled times like these. It is hard for us to understand how You do the things You do, for only You have the power to make our dreams come true. Even in life's darkest hour, You somehow send us light and we feel Your presence with us throughout the longest nights. From tragedies come blessings we may not understand, for often we fail to see Your footprints in the sand. As we survive the storms of life, bright rainbows will appear, for when our faith is tested, the way becomes more clear, Lord, You have been my anchor, my hope and guiding light, and forever I will praise You - morning, noon, and night!"

It seems like some people don't count their lives with each heart beat, or fully appreciate each breath of air that they take. I was dusting off my old hourglass. I turned it over and watched how the grains of sand fell from the top globe into the bottom globe. Like the grains of sand in that hourglass, our destiny has been predestined, by God, long before we took our first breath. I'll end this story with a poem written by Teres Dana called, "Hourglass." These are her words: "Life is fragile and passes quickly, one grain in this hourglass of time... Like a drop of dew that dries swiftly when the first ray looks down to the ground. Not today, not tomorrow, just in a moment... Nothing will remain of our existence; what we fought so bravely every day; to gain all kinds of goods forgetting what's important. What is more important in this beautiful world; any pursuit of the goods of this earth? Or maybe you need to enrich hearts, the beauty of kindness and great love...this one love will take you from Time to Eternity."

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