

**The Eulogy of
James Dean Shepherd**

(November 29, 1934 – August 22, 2020)

August 27, 2020

Green Hills Funeral Home and Cemetery

1621 US Highway 29

Troy, Alabama 36079

Joe Griffin, Pastor

Grace Doctrine Church

1821 South River Road

St. Charles, Missouri

We have gathered together today to celebrate the transfer of Dean Shepherd's soul and spirit into heaven where he is now face-to-face with the Lord.

I use the word "celebrate" because this is the attitude that Dean would wish for us to have. Make no mistake; this is indeed a time of sorrow. But sorrow is a human emotion that is natural for those who are left behind by a loved one's departure to be with the Lord. It is the result of a sudden realization that there can never again be a time for earthly fellowship, companionship, or rapport.

Yet, although sorrow and grief are normal and legitimate emotions, they do not overwhelm those who have placed their personal trust in Christ. Stronger than these emotions are the clear testimony of biblical truth that applies to Dean's death and these principles provide for his family and friends a source of great joy and gratitude.

I have known Dean since I was a child. His is my first cousin. There are those in our family that have preceded Dean in death. Toward the building in that corner lie our grandparents: Alexander, known as "Boss Alex," and Mamie Griffin. Tom, Dean, and I called them "Poppee and Ditty." Next to them are my parents, Douglass Griffin, known as "Speed," and my mother, Nona. They had one son and he is me. I'm Joe Boykin Griffin. I'm married to Jo Henra and we have three children: Shane, Shannon, and Shaefer.

Poppee and Ditty had a second son, Frederick Dean Griffin who was killed in an automobile accident in 1940. **Their oldest child was a girl named Clara Boykin Griffin who was married to James Max Shepherd, both of whom are buried here.**



They had two sons, **Thomas Griffin Shepherd** who married **Anne Elizabeth Whaley**. They have three daughters, **Lynn** Shepherd married Weston Stewart, now deceased; **Diane** Shepherd married Randy Wright; and **Kim** Shepherd married Rick Nelson.

James Dean Shepherd married **Helen Ward**. They have four children: **Michelle** who married **Tom Lanum**. They have four children: daughter **Heather Lanum** married Emerson Herridge; son **James Dean Shepherd, Jr.**, married **Ann Gwyn**; son **David Thomas Shepherd** married **Laurie Green**; and daughter **Claire Marie Shepherd** married **Richard Roberts**.

Dean and Helen's children have provided for them nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren:

Michele and Tom Lanum:

Grandchildren: Heather, Katie, and Julee

Heather and Emerson Herridge have great-grandchildren: Wyatt, Elliot, and Sydney

Katie and Cody Krisch have great-grandchild, Trevor

Julee and Cole Kennedy have great-grandchild, Owen

Jim and Ann Shepherd:

Grandchildren: Ashley and Jim

Ashley and Melvin McGinnis have no children.

David and Laurie Shepherd:

Grandchildren: Megan and Ryan

Megan and Michael Wahlert have no children

Ryan and Emily Shepherd have great-grandchild, Jackson

Claire and Richard Roberts:

Grandchildren: Erin and Alex

This is the family tree on the Griffin side of the family. There are more relatives in Max Shepherd's chart pedigree, but I do not have access to it.

So why go through the family tree at all? Because beginning with Alex and Mamie Griffin, is how all of you came into being on the Griffin side, the other half provided by the Shepherd side. Nice group of folks.

This Shepherd-Griffin clan includes the genetic line of Dean Shepherd. He is the paterfamilias—the head of the family—and each of you fall under his human authority. Together, all of you comprise a single “family unit.” Marriage has brought in individuals from other families, but with regard to the branch we memorialize today, Dean Shepherd is the paterfamilias, of those gathered here.

Some heads of families do not have a very respectable personal reputation. Such was not the case for Dean Shepherd. Dean served in the United States Air Force and National Guard units. He was one of the original pilots in the Strategic Air Command’s deployment of the B-47 Stratojets out of Smokey Hill Air Force Base in Salina, Kansas, in 1954. His last tour of duty was the Air Force Major General of the State of Alabama’s National Guard. In addition, he held a doctor’s degree in dentistry which he practiced in Anniston until retirement.

Dean’s personality was complex. He was extremely focused on truth which means he was a fervent listener to discern whether a person could be trusted or not. As a paterfamilias, he was very protective of his family, but also very willing to point out errors of judgment. He was a master wordsmith. He was a comedic genius. He rarely told a joke, but when commenting on almost any subject, his delivery was peppered with clever and witty turns of phrases that caused listeners to howl in laughter.

It goes without saying that Dean was a family man. He loved each and every one of you. He would support you to the hilt when you were right but would not put up with deviations from standards of good behavior. In other words, it was an ingrained policy that telling the truth from the get-go smoothed the skids for the rest of the conversation. His standards were designed to help you develop into persons of honor and integrity.

I was the youngest of three cousins. Tom was the oldest. He had the same disposition as Dean’s but took second fiddle in the humor department as most people did. I am the youngest of the three. I took my brow beatings from them early in life and most were richly deserved.

Jo Henra and I did not see Dean very often after we moved to Missouri. However, in the year 2001, our daughter, Shannon, and her husband, Chris, moved to Birmingham which allowed us to make contact with Dean over at Anniston and we were able to renew our acquaintances. Over the past several years we have met for lunch during our July trips to Alabama that also included Dean’s road warrior, Alex Roberts, a.k.a. “The Bar.”

There is a personality in the Bible that reminds me of Dean. His name is not given. He is referred to as a **ἐκατοντάρχης** (*hekatontárchēs*), which is the military rank of “centurion.” Translated, it means, “one hundred.” A centurion is a noncommissioned officer in the Roman army who commanded a unit of one-hundred men.

The centurion, his servant, and Jesus Christ are the subjects of the passage in Luke 7:2–10. The geographic location is in the village of Capernaum, located on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee and the primary headquarters of the Lord’s ministries in the district of Galilee:

Luke 7:2 A centurion’s servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die.

v. 3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to Him, asking Him to come and heal his servant.

v. 4 When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with Him, “This man deserves to have You do this,

v. 5 because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.”

v. 6 So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to Him: “Lord, don’t trouble Yourself, for I do not deserve to have You come under my roof.

v. 7 That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed.

v. 8 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

v. 9 When Jesus heard this, He was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following Him, He said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.”

v. 10 Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.
(NIV)



This centurion directed his personal faith at the claims of Jesus. Not only did Jesus respond to this man's faith, but He also healed the man's servant. Jesus did both things. Why? Because this centurion had expressed his personal faith that Jesus had the means and the power to respond to his request.

There are several extremely significant words in the Bible that have life-altering impact in a person's life. The noun, "faith," and the verb, "believe," are two of them.

These two words imply personal trust in the object of one's faith. For a person's faith to be trusted, it must have confidence in the working object of that faith. The working object of the centurion's faith was Jesus. He had confidence Jesus had the power and the ability to heal his servant.

Jesus followed through on the request by curing the servant from his illness and returning him to good health.

The principle is that the centurion had authority over 100 men. It was his duty to take care of them while at the same time being their leader in accomplishing assignments issued to him by senior-ranking officers.

Dean's extensive 36-year background in the military impacted his duties as a husband, father, and grandfather of those who joined his family.

Spiritually, he also came to recognized divine authority. For his entire career he acquired authority over other airmen but throughout his service there were always senior ranking officers to whom he was duty bound to submit.

Dean and the centurion were each deployed within a system of authority, he in the United States military and the centurion among the Roman legions. The central issue the Luke 7 passage illustrates is that each man recognized they both possessed authority over others.

The Lord recognized that this Gentile, possibly a believer, had more faith than the Jews did throughout all of Israel. It is by faith that this centurion certainly had more of a chance for salvation than did Israel's Jews.

To illustrate further, let us consult another unbelieving Gentile in the city of Philippi, a city in Macedonia. On Paul's second missionary journey, he and Silas were arrested by the locals and thrown into jail. Around midnight, an earthquake struck the area which caused the jail's doors to open and the prisoners' chains to be dislodged.

This event also awakened the jailer, who was fearful all his prisoners had escaped. He drew his own sword and was poised to run himself through when Paul cried out that none had escaped. The jailer was so relieved he fell down in front of Paul and Silas and asked them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Their answer to the jailer is recorded in:

Acts 16:31 They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

There are three important phrases in this verse. The **first** is the verb, **πιστεύω (pisteúō)**: “you believe.” They kept things very simple for the man. The only thing he has to do is use his own volition to make an independent decision to believe something.

In verse 30, he asked the question, “What must I do to be saved.” He is given the answer in verse 31. It is up to his free will to make the decision, either “Yes, I do,” or “No, I don’t.”

Paul and Silas gave him the answer, but the jailer must respond positively for salvation. The verb, **πιστεύω (pisteúō)**, “to believe,” is transitive, therefore it must have a working object which is the **second** important phrase, “the Lord Jesus Christ.”

If the jailer responds positively, then the **third** important phrase comes into play, the future tense of the verb, **σώζω (sōzō)**: “you will be saved.”

If the second phrase is accepted, then the future tense of “you will be saved” becomes an established fact.

Like the centurion, Dean Shepherd spent his military career having authority over those under him while also under the authority of those over him. But the ultimate authority to Whom he submitted was God the Father. Like the centurion and the Philippian jailer, Dean made the most important decision in his life when he placed his personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life.

I speak for him when I say to each of you gathered here today: It is Dean’s most fervent desire that every member of his family would make the same decision that he did regarding his eternal future. If there is just one of you who has not made that decision, his most urgent desire is that you do so here today, right now.

All you are asked to do is simply “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

Now I want to tie all of this together. As you are currently aware, this nation and this world is in the midst of chaos. Dean Shepherd would recommend that you consider the two men we have observed this morning. A centurion of the Roman Legions and a jailer of a Macedonian prison. Each had duly appointed authority and therefore power over other people. However, they also were under the authority of those over them.

Dean Shepherd would have had no problem dealing with each man's situation. Regardless of what this world and this life presents to you, if you possess the infinite power of the teachings of the Bible in your soul and believe them to be true, then nothing will cause you to be afraid. Depend on the One who can heal the sick and also the One who can set you free from the challenges of this present hour.

Jesus said to His disciples, "If you continue in studying My Bible, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

The word, "truth" is the Greek noun, *ἀλήθεια (alētheia)*. It is used 107 times in the New Testament. This world has many ideas about what it regards as truth. Yet, the Bible claims to be the only eternal source of truth. Make it your first resource.

Father, we thank You for the opportunity to celebrate the transfer of Dean Shepherd's soul from this world into Your heavenly presence. Console members of his family and his legion of friends who mourn his absence but encourage them to keep moving forward in the challenge left before them. Dean Shepherd was a good soldier for Christ. May we be motivated by his leadership so that, in his absence, we rely on the immutable power found in the *alētheia* of Your Word. We lift our prayer of gratitude in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who is *Yehowah Sevaoth*—the Lord of the Armies. Amen.

(End JAS20-01: *The Eulogy of James Dean Shepherd.*)