

Facing End of Life Confidently

Death is a topic we avoid because sometimes it's just too hard to talk about. But for the Christian, after we study what the Bible says about death and dying, hopefully we'll discover a new confidence and a fresh hope that deepens our faith and changes what appears to be our darkest hour into our finest hour.

First, we must understand the brevity of this life.

14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. James 4:14

How many times have we had someone pass away and we say, "but they passed before their time," or "they were too young," or "this was so unexpected." And we walk through extreme grief. When it seems the godly die before their time we should consider that God was protecting and sparing them from evil He saw was to come.

"The righteous perish and no one takes it to heart. The devout are taken away and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace. They find rest as they lie in death." Isaiah 57:1-2 (NIV)

God knows and sees things we don't. **We have to trust that this wasn't a taking; this was a sparing.** We probably will not understand what this sparing or protection was until we get into eternity, but there's comfort in knowing that **God knows our appointed time and death does not surprise God. While we can add to the quality of our life, we cannot add to the quantity of our days.**

"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." Psalm 139:16

Second, we must understand the hope of heaven, so we do not succumb to the fear of death.

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. ⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 (NIV)

"for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I'm to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I'm hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account."
Philippians 1:21, 23-24

We may think, especially in our latter days or living with a terminal illness, *if it's better to be with the Lord, then why don't I just depart and go be with the Lord right now?* As mentioned earlier, **God knows our appointed time.** Imagine if the Apostle Paul decided it was *his* decision of when it would be better for him to die. We would have missed out on so many of the beautiful and necessary letters he wrote that are in our Bible. **Paul was eager to be with the Lord, but he also recognized it was not his decision of when because the Lord still had work for him to do.** The Lord has work for each of us to do until our very last breath.

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Paul compares the frailties of this life to the perfection that awaits and points our focus to our eternal home.

John MacArthur shares his thoughts in his Jan. 29, 1995 sermon, [*Facing Death Confidently Part 2.*](#)

Faith always has its greatest work to do at the very last. The reality of faith is most clearly manifest in the face of death. Paul had the kind of faith that was strong in life and strong in death. He finished well. He died with patience. He died with hope. He died with joy. He died with eagerness. And he left behind a tremendous witness to the integrity of his faith and his confidence in the truth of God's Word and the excellencies of God's ways. God is honored when believers die triumphantly. He is honored when they are confident in the face of death, even cheerful. And certainly, our last and best witness to the love and devotion we have to our Lord is how we die.

Third, we must live life with purpose and a sense of urgency of the work for which the Lord has set us apart.

"I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will award for me on that day. And not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing." 2 Timothy 4:7-8

In the ancient Greco Roman Olympics of Paul's day, the race was not a sprint, but a long race requiring endurance. Paul uses a common event of his day to admonish and challenge the church to live out what he himself was living out, a life sold out to Christ. **Life on earth is described as a fight, a race, a trial, but eternity is described as the reward.** Grieving the separation from a loved one's passing is normal. In our grief, however, may we find comfort in knowing they have fought the good fight and run the good race, and their trials are over.

“consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you can be mature, complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:2-4

Life on earth is full of trials and learning to persevere so that we can gain maturity.

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” James 1:12

Spurgeon said this: *“Depend on it. Your dying hour will be your best hour you have ever known. Your last moment will be your richest moment, better than the day of your birth will be the day of your death. It shall be the beginning of heaven, the rising of a sun that shall go no more down forever.”*

Processing the reality of our own pending death (or a personal tragedy or loss of a loved one) with the knowledge that God is good, sovereign, and is fully in control (and I am not) gives the Christian a sense of comfort, peace, and hope when we, or our loved one, rests in the arms and presence of Jesus with a race well-run and they hear, *“Well done good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness.” Matthew 25:23*