

"GOD - I DON'T WANT TO DIE"

How can we get into this one, no one really wants to die, deep inside of their selves. Most will do anything to keep from dying or being kill. Though some call Death a friend as they grow older, they feel its the only peace they may ever have. The choice is to escape either way from frying or from life.

Maybe a little story comes to mind that might help. There was a wealthy householder who sent his servant into the market place to buy food for a banquet. When the servant came to the market place, he saw Death. Terrified he fled and returned to his master and said, "Master, I just saw Death in the market place. Please let me borrow your horse and flee way up into the hills where I will hide in a cave."

Later the same day the master went to the market place and he too saw Death. he approached Death and said, "Death, why did you frighten my servant so today?"

"Oh", said Death, "I didn't mean to frighten him. In fact I was surprised to see him here, for I have an appointment with him tonight in a cave high up in the hills."

The servant in this story is typical of who do everything within their power to flee death. Few people are willing to understand of life the many people the presence of that death is part Death is not usually the topic of conversation during a ball or any other party. People who are having fun are not interest in discussing morbid subjects.

Have you noticed the tone of a conversation changes when death is mentioned? People become nervous and edgy; they hope by ignoring death it will go away. Even in the last...moments of life, there is the struggle to avoid death and a cry to God for the continuation of life.

Whether we are willing to discuss or even think about it, death is a subject we will ultimately have to face, because all have an appointment with death.

Most people fear death, and even Christians frequently express uneasiness at the thought of dying. WHY? Because death is unknown; and anytime we face something unknown or strange, we experience tension or foreboding.

After the resurrection, Jesus talked about life, not death. He didn't spend the forty days telling the disciples what they could expect in the moment life ceased and they entered the other side. He spent time talking about what they were to do with their lives.

Another reason we fear death is the dread of facing God. We know we will have to stand before God to answer for our lives and are painfully aware we have not lived as we should nor done

all we could. The thought of seeing our lives put on God's instant replay screen is chilling!

I've heard it said, "I am in great fear of death. I could not face God unless I had a chance to reform before my life was up." This expresses the innate fear of most people.

Death is something people desperately seek to avoid or delay regardless of cost. Millions are being poured into research in our effort to deter or defeat the grim reaper. People want new hearts new kidneys and other "spare parts" that will enable them to prolong life. (This I know only too well.) If this mad pursuit is continued, hospitals will have a "parts" department just like the auto shop; Medical science may prolong life, but in the end death always wins.

People invest fortunes in an effort to stay death's hand for a short while longer. Just before Thomas Hobbs, an English skeptic, died, he said, "If I had the whole_ world I would give it to live one day."

People frantically search for that eternal fountain of youth. Women try to find it in an assortment of creams and oils. But alas, time marches on and their faces and figures show the weight of years. Men, too fight off the approaching of the forties. They dye their hair and get a young girlfriend, but their aching muscles tell them that old age cannot be delayed --time marches on! Each generation ignores the facts while seeking a way to remain forever young.

Since no one is anxious to die, how do we account for the increasing number of suicides? The man who commits suicide doesn't want to die; he wants an escape from misery. Suicide is not a desire for death, it's a frantic rebellion against society and the aging of life. The suicide victim would avoid it if he could. find an alternative to his miserable life.

In spite of the fear of death, it is part of life because life is temporary. The prophet Isaiah described life as a tender succulent plant that is exposed to the scorching sun:

"----All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

The grass withers, the flowers fades, But the word of our God stands forever." (Isa. 40:6-8)

Crops in the early morning summer dew looks fresh and crisp, but by mid-afternoon the burning heat causes the same plants to wilt and droop. Life is like that; we begin fresh, but with the weight of years, we wilt and fade away.

James uses a different figure to describe the transient nature of life. "----You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away" (James 4:14). Think about it ---your life is no more than the early morning mist that is burned away by the sun.

Death is a reminder of man's rebellion against God. Man was created to live forever, but after his rebellion, he lost that right. He was evicted from the Garden which prevented him from partaking of the tree of life. Eating the forbidden fruit brought man the curse of death. Never has

so much been lost by so little. Adam and Eve lost the right to physical life, and the forces of death began to tug at their bodies.

But more than physical life was lost in Eden. Adam and Eve experienced spiritual death long before their physical demise. They experienced spiritual death when they were driven from God's presence in Eden. Actually, physical death was a blessing, it would be an unimaginable torment to live forever in bodies cursed .by sin ----subject to disease and infirmities.

Each time we read the obituary notices or see the funeral coach pass, we see a grim reminder that the penalty is sin is being exacted.

Each of us has a divine appointment with death that can't be ignored. Since death is certain, do we need to be afraid? No! God has made it possible for us to face death-afraid.

The only person who has any reason to fear death is the one who has never by faith trusted Christ as his or her personal Saviour. But once you have, you no longer need to fear death.

An examination of God's Word reveals several provisions that make it possible for the Christian to face death unafraid. These provisions are designed to give comfort and confidence in the face of death.

First: We need to view death as the stepping stone to eternity. " it is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment." (Hebrews 9:27) Regardless of the length of life, our days are numbered. The Psalmist says, "As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years----" (Psalms 90:10). Three thousand years ago the age span of man was set at seventy years. Today with all our medical research, the current life span for a man is 67.7 years while a woman's is seventy four. These average out to be just over seventy. Medical science hasn't been able to do much to delay our appointment with the grim reaper.

Death introduces us to the first phase of eternity ---judgment! Life is a series of opportunities in preparation for the day of judgment. The first thing you will do in eternity will be to give an accounting of the stewardship of your life. Preparation for that event must be made during life.

Eternity begins when life ends. Death is the doorway to eternity through which we must pass to experience eternal life. It has been said that life begins at forty, but this isn't true. We have to die before life really begins!

Second: We need to see that death represents a promotion. Most people think of death as the destruction of all we hope for. How can we say that death is a promotion people ask me? Death ushers us into the presence of Christ.

"Therefore, being always of good courage and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord -

For we walk by faith, not by sight -- we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at ,home with the Lord." (II Cor 5:6-8)

As long as we walk around in the house called our body, we are earth-bound, separated from Christ. But the moment we die, our house (body) drops away and we are ready to be ushered into the presence of the Lord. This tremendous truth is the basis of Paul's good courage. He faced the prospect of death everyday. Without a divine perspective, he could have been glum and depressed, but he wasn't. He saw death as an usher who would bring him to the presence of Christ. Be of good courage, death takes us to be with our Lord!

Paul goes on to say that dying is better than living. He wasn't a morbid, withdrawn skeptic who was miserable in life. On the contrary, he was filled with zest and enthusiasm for life.

Life was great, but he anticipated something greater---death. Listen: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21). Even though he was stoned, imprisoned, and beaten for preaching the gospel, he was consumed with the passion of living for Christ. But as he thought about what lay beyond death, he said that is gain.

The knowledge that dying is better than living creates a tension in life. He said, "----I am hard pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake." (Phil. 1:23-24) Paul never hinted that death represented a bleak fearful prospect. He anticipated the promotion of death!

Be careful here. Just because death promotes us to the presence of Christ, we are not to rush out into the freeway and flirt with death. Life has a purpose.

The only reason we are here on the earth now instead of in heaven with Christ is that we have a task to complete before going home.

Life is great! Live it to the full, but don't let your zest for life obscure your vision of the promotion that comes the moment you leave this life on earth.

Third: Remember death has been conquered by life. The dictionary is incorrect when it defines death as a permanent ending of life. The Bible makes it clear that death is not a permanent ending to life, it is a transfer to another sphere of life.

Jesus Christ is life and His life conquers death. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4) "I am the resurrection and the life ---" (John 1:25). "I am the way, and the truth, and the life ----" (John 14:6).

Once we realize that Jesus Christ abolished death, it removes the sting and power of death. Paul tells us, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 15:56-57).

Tombstones in the cemetery are visible reminders of the power of sin to kill the body. But when we lay loved ones in the ground, we can be comforted in the knowledge that Jesus passed through physical death and came back victorious defeating death. Death is no longer the sovereign king over man.

Death has everyone in its appointment book. We have no idea when our number will come up, but this is no reason for pessimism, gloom, or fear. God has made it possible for us to face death unafraid. You and I can be free from fear of death if you will trust in God.

Knowing this and Jesus Christ allows us to face life and death unafraid!

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