

How to Face Death



Victory Over Death (Part 14)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue to study together a theme that is of such tremendous importance to each one of us, the theme of "Victory Over Death."

In my preceding talks I've been explaining that there are two appointments none of us will miss. The first is death, the second is judgment. All of us will eventually have to give a personal account to God for the things we have done in this life.

Ultimately, our destiny will depend on one thing, our personal relationship to Jesus Christ. He is the watershed of human souls. Faith in Jesus assures us of pardon, peace and eternal life. On the other hand, unbelief will just as surely bring upon us judgment and rejection by God.

Today I'm going to make a very personal and practical application of these truths. My subject today is, "How to Face Death." And let me remind you once more, that one of the appointments you're not going to miss is the one I'm talking about right now.

I suggest to you that if you are to face death with peace, with confidence, with calm assurance, there are four main things you are going to have to do and I am going to explain them to you. First of all, you have to face it! You have to face the fact that you are going to die! You are going to die, I am going to die, each one of us is going to die. As a minister, one of the things that often amazed me is how few people really are prepared for death. It's an extraordinary thing that people can go through life knowing full well that they are going to die and never make adequate preparation for that sure event. It's not morbid to face the fact that you are going to die; it's simply realistic. It's very unrealistic to live on all through this life without making preparation for what comes at the end of life. I want to show you what Paul had to say about death. In Philippians 1:21, he said:

> "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (NAS)

He wasn't afraid of dying. He had faced the realities of sin, of judgment, of God's requirements in his life; and because he had been willing to face them and to face the issue of death, he had passed into a kind of relationship with God where there was no more fear, but really a keen desire to be

released from the bondage of this fleshly life and to enter into the fullness of God's presence. And every one of us who will do the same as Paul did can have this same calm assurance. We can say as Paul said, "To live is Christ, but to die is gain." I just want to explain to you that if you cannot say, "To live is Christ," then you cannot say, "To die is gain." Alright, that is the first requirement. Face the fact you are going to die! Make preparation! Get related to God through Jesus Christ in such a way that there is no more condemnation, there's no more fear, there's no more uncertainty.

This leads on to the second requirement: accept God's offer of pardon, peace, and eternal life. In Romans 5:1, Paul says this:

> "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

By putting our faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on our behalf, by letting Him bear the guilt of our sin and by receiving, by faith, His righteousness imputed to us, we have been justified. You remember how I described what it is to be justified? Justified is just as if I had never sinned – because I have a righteousness imputed to me that has never known sin – the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And in that righteousness I can face God, death and eternity, without a tremor, without a fear. Again, the apostle John says in his first epistle 5:11-13:

> "And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." (NAS)

God has given a testimony to the whole human race, that He has offered to us eternal life. This life is in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. If we receive Jesus Christ, in Him we have received eternal life. Notice, it is in the present tense; "He who has the Son, has the life." It's not something that's going to happen after death. It's something that happens now in this time-spaced world. If you leave it until after death, you will have left it too late. You have to settle that issue now! He who has the Son has life!

Notice, too, what John says in the 13th verse there, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." It's not merely that we believe. Through believing we come to know. You may say, "I believe in Jesus," but I want to ask you "do you know"? The end purpose of believing, is knowing and those of us who believe – the way God requires us to believe in Jesus Christ, not merely believe – but we know that we have eternal life. We have it now. We are not waiting for it after death and we know that when death comes, death cannot touch or destroy that eternal life which we already have in Jesus Christ.

Third requirement is that you dedicate yourself here and now to Christ's service in this world. Earlier this week I pointed out that we all are going to stand as believers before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the things done in our bodies – whether good or bad. And I reminded you that there are only two categories of things that we do in this life. They're either good or they are bad. Anything that is not positively good is bad. So, we have to dedicate ourselves to Christ in such a way that what we do is good – it's acceptable to God.

And I pointed out there are three things we need to check in this connection: Motives, obedience and power. What are our motives? Are they self-seeking? Are we seeking our own ambition, our own pleasure, our own self-satisfaction of glory, or are we sincerely motivated by the desire for God's glory – God is going to sift our motives one day.

Secondly, obedience. Are we serving God on His terms, or on ours? Are we obedient to the clear statements and requirements of Scripture, or are we trying to fashion some kind of new religion of our own which suits us better than the requirements of Scripture? We are going to be sifted on the question of obedience.

And then, power. Are we serving God in our own power or in His power? Have we allowed the Holy Spirit to come in and take complete control of us, motivate us and empower, and enable us to serve God in a way that is acceptable to Him?

Now I come to the fourth requirement. This takes perhaps a little more explaining, but it is very important. The fourth requirement is let God wean you from the things of time. I want to read a passage from Isaiah, chapter 40, which is one of my favorite passages: (Isaiah 40:6-8)

> "A voice said, 'Call out,' Then he [that's the prophet] answered, 'What shall I call out?' [And this is the message] All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath [or Spirit] of the Lord blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands

> forever." (NAS)

How true a picture of life that is. We're surrounded by things that are beautiful. We're surrounded by people we love. There is so much to love and to appreciate, and yet everything that we see is grass – ourselves included. It blossoms and flourishes in the morning – perishes by nightfall. That's the kind of life that we have. That's the kind of person we are. And it says, "It perishes, it fades, because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it."

I used to wonder about that and then God showed me one day this truth. God gives loveliness in the temporal world and then He causes it to wither. Why? Because God wants us to know about loveliness. He wants to know the loveliness that He's capable of producing, but He never wants us to be permanently at home in this world. So He arouses our sense of loveliness, our appreciation of beauty in all that is good, and then He causes the temporary loveliness of this world to wither so that we may set our hearts on the loveliness that is beyond this world and in the next. So God weans us from the things of time. In 1 Corinthians 15:19, Paul says this:

> "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men." (NAS)

Our hope in Christ does not cease with this life. It gets brighter and brighter throughout eternity. And then in Colossians 3:1-4, Paul says:

> "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. [Notice, your hearts and your minds. Your affections and the things you think about are to be set on the things above. Then Paul goes on:] For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." (NIV)

Bear that in mind – the ultimate reward of the believer is beyond the things of time. That's when our true life, which is Christ, will be manifested in it's glory and in fullness. That lies ahead, beyond the grave.

And let me close by reading to you the words of Job 5:26:

> "You will come to the grave in full vigor, like sheaves gathered in season." (NIV)

Death doesn't need to be an accident, something that comes untimely or too soon, something that you're not prepared for. If you're moving in the purposes of God, you can come to death like a sheaf that's ripe in its season and God will gather you in at the appointed time.

I remember when I lived in the city of Ramala in Israel; there was an Arab women who died – a believer – and my first wife, Lydia, said to her grandson, "What did she die of?" And the grandson answered this, "She didn't die of anything. She was just ripe." What a beautiful answer. How are you going to die? Ripe or unripe? Remember one thing, you don't have to die sick. There are very few believers in the Bible of whom it's recorded that they died sick. You die, not because you're sick, but because you're ripe, if you live the way the Bible enjoins.

Alright, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be dealing with a subject that follows on naturally from my talk today. My subject will be, "How to Face the Death of a Loved One."

Radio Program

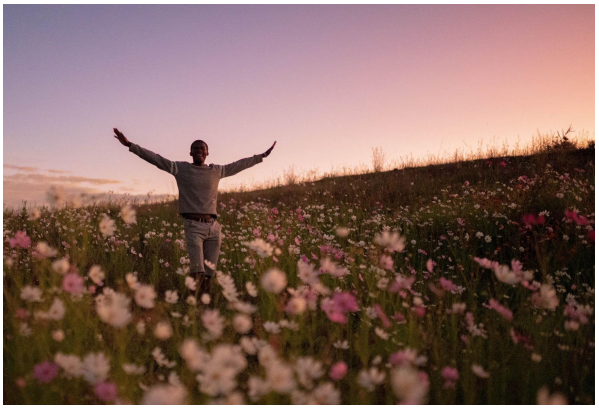
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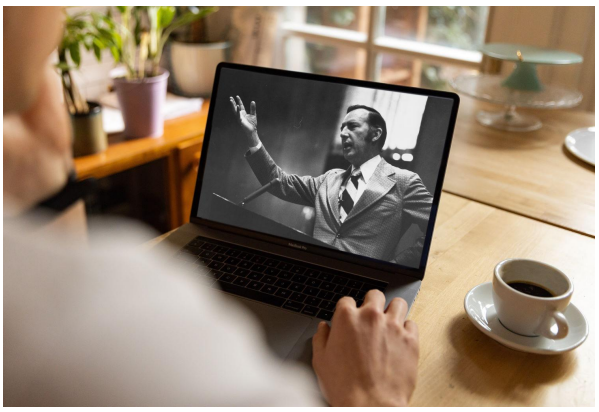
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