

Facing Our Last Enemy

Death. What a dreaded word. What havoc and fear such a small word raises! Immediately the questions come. Who died, how did it happen, why, etc.? Shock is the initial reaction, then denial of the truth, then as shock wears off, slowly acceptance and heart wrenching grief follows. Death is our mortal enemy. It severs strong earthly ties and leaves a wake of emptiness in the hearts of those left behind. It forces us to face the reality that this is the end of man here below, and that we will have to face it one day as well. The worst thing about this dreaded word is that we brought it upon ourselves. By the sin of our organic head Adam, death came upon all men. We have all sinned and must face this last enemy.

As young people we often have the attitude that death is a long ways away for us. We push away thoughts of death when they arise, thinking we will save those thoughts for a later date. We all know that death is inevitable, and yet we don't like to seriously consider it while in our youth, because it creates a soberness that we don't want to address. We don't want to think that one day we will die and leave all the people and possessions we have behind. We don't want to "shape up" quite yet, but would rather "live it up" for a few more years. We fear to think of death, because of the uncertainty of how we might die, or how soon it could be. We would rather think on how we can fulfill our own desires while here on earth. After all, who wants to think on death when we are so full of life and energy at a young age? Then God removes someone who is close to us and we stare this truth of man's mortality in the face.

Fear is the natural instinct that arises in the heart of every man when death is faced. Death is a mortal enemy, and we still have a human nature prone to fear. There are so many fears that naturally arise. We question God's goodness. We wonder if the person who died is in heaven, even though we should be comforted in knowing that God is the judge, not man, and that every elect child of his shall most surely be there. Satan bombards us with our own sins and creates doubt concerning the love of our Father in heaven and our own worthiness. The fears of our human nature go on and on. Those of the world refuse to deal with the reality of death. When faced with it, they either become despondent and depressed, or they ignore it and dwell only on what the deceased person accomplished in his life. They would rather celebrate the life a person lived rather than dealing with death and the reality of what happens after death, because for them there is no comfort in death.

If not for the grace of God, and for his gift of faith whereby we cling to the promises he has given to us in his word, we would follow in the footsteps of this world when faced with the reality of death. Facing our last enemy would be terrifying without Christ. But in Christ we are able to say the words of 1Cor 15: 55-57: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Christ is victorious over death! What a beautiful truth that God gives us. All of the fears of our human nature are extinguished when we stand at the foot the cross where Christ accomplished our victory over sin and death. We refute Satan’s attack with Paul’s words in Romans 8: 33–34, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Our head is in heaven interceding for us! How will not the body be united to the head one day in heaven? Those ties that have been severed on earth with our fellow brethren in Christ will not remain so, for we will be united with the body of Christ in heaven to live forever with him. We say with Paul, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38–39).

Young people, God gives us so much comfort and assurance in the face of death. Death, our last enemy, is inevitable and is a reality that we all must ponder. We must not ignore it, but rather must view death as it has been conquered in Christ. Death has no power over us, but is a mere passageway from this life into our heavenly life with Christ. As we look at death, we remember the psalmist’s words in Psalm 116:15, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” Knowing this, and hearing the words of the apostle Paul concerning our victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, we also take heed to his words in 1Cor 15:58, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”. Notice, young people, we don’t just “forget” to live rightly because after all we are saved and are going to heaven after we die. We don’t just go on in our sins with the attitude that we may sin that grace may abound. This is impenitence, and God specifically tells us that no such impenitent sinner will inherit the

kingdom of heaven. This impenitence is what God has saved us from. Therefore as children of God who have been redeemed, we remain steadfast in the truth of the one who has made heaven and all things possible for us, and ALWAYS abound in serving him.

This is the attitude we young people must have concerning our last enemy. We don't satisfy our earthly cravings and build up treasures on earth; no, we face the reality that death is our end in this life here below, and therefore we don't labor in vain for that which perishes, but we lay up our treasures in heaven, where our king dwells. We cast off our fear of death, and with hope we look forward to the day when it will be said, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (Rom 15:54).