



Lay Hold On Eternal Life

By Rick Shrader

It may seem unusual to most people to talk frankly about death. But as seniors, this should be the first thing we have settled in our minds. Why should we not want to go to heaven? Augustine put it this way, “For sooner or later every man must die, and we groan, and pray, and travail in pain, and cry to God, that we may die a little later. How much more ought we to cry to him that we may come to that place where we shall never die!”¹ The most important testimony for a Christian is that there is an eternal life after this one, and for the believer, that eternal life is in heaven. Death just happens to be the gateway from this place to that place.

As we draw nearer to the end of this life our physical appearance takes on the trappings of that journey but that is just the necessary changing of clothes. “Not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor 5:4). Death is the last statement we have to make while wearing our older clothes. Here are five facts about death for the Christian.

1. Death is inevitable. It is “appointed” to us by God because of sin (Heb 9:27). “As in Adam all die” (1 Cor 15:22). Since we know it is coming, shouldn’t we be prepared for the event? Not just in salvation of the soul, but in the making of the journey. “The time of my departure is at hand” (2 Tim 4:6) and so we should be packed and ready.

2. Death is instantaneous. Jesus said “He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (Jn 11:25). It is the dying process that takes time. The valley of the shadow of death may take years for some or it may come quickly for others but death itself is but a moment. As soon as we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8).

3. Death is enviable. “To die is gain,” “to depart and be with Christ is far better” (Phil 1:21,23). Spurgeon said, “O worker for God, death cannot touch thy sacred mission! Be thou content to die if the truth shall live the better because thou diest.”² Doug McLachlan recently wrote, “Death for the believer in Christ is no longer the

grim ogre it once was” and likened it to a bee without a sting, a “stingless scorpion” (1 Cor 15:55).³ If death transfers us to heaven with such confidence of what awaits, why should we dread the crossing? I don’t minimize the painful process some must experience but in such cases death is the relief designed by God.

4. Death is a memorial. Peter said, “Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease” (2 Pet 1:15). Jesus prayed to the Father, “But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves” (Jn 17:13). At your funeral no eyes will be wider and more attentive than your children and grandchildren. The confidence you display at the time of death will stay with them the rest of their lives.

5. Death is a stewardship. When you walk through the valley of the shadow of death without fear, it is a testimony that the Lord is your Shepherd and you want or need nothing else. Someone said, “The last days are the best witnesses for a man. Blessed shall he be that so lived that he was desired, and so died that he was missed.”⁴ Paul said, “Nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

Let’s show this world that what we believed and preached is true and will sustain us in our last moments on earth. As we have daily died with Christ, let us finally die with Him. Let’s die because we are going to heaven not merely because we are leaving this world.

Notes:

1. St. Augustine, “Discourse on the Lord’s Prayer,” Hazeltime, Mayo W. Ed. *Orations from Homer to McKinley* (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1902) 1189.
2. C.H. Spurgeon, *C.H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography*, Vol. I (Pasadena: Pilgrim Publications, 1992) 4.
3. Douglas McLachlan, *Thirsting for Authenticity* (St. Michael, MN: Reference Point Pub., 2017) 357.
4. Robert Harris in Paxton Hood’s, *Isaac Watts His Life and Hymns* (Belfast: Ambassador, 2001) 257.