Thoughts on death

It has been said there are only two things in life you can be certain of – “death and taxes.” It has also been said that everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to “die.”

Death is no respecter of persons – with the exception of those living on the earth when Christ returns - it is something we will all come face to face with at some point. Psalm 89:48 – “No one can live forever; all will die. No one can escape the power of the grave.” NLT

With every birth comes an appointment with death. Hebrews 9:27 - “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” NKJV

Satan instigated sin, and sin brings death:

Romans 5:12 – “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned…” NKJV

Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” NKJV

James 1:12-16: “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.” NKJV

Let there be no mistake, because of sin, death is real. It is the common enemy of every person, whether righteous or unrighteous, male or female. And death can be devastating!

I. Devastated by death

“The seven-year-old son of our neighbors died last week. They are devastated. So are we. What can we tell them?”

We must begin with this – “God is a good God.” Though we don’t always understand His actions, we can trust His heart, because God does only what is good. But the father of the dead teenager, the widow of the young soldier, and the parents of a seven-year-old do ask, “How could death be good?”

Part of the answer may be found in Isaiah 57:1-2: “Good people are taken away, but no one understands. Those who do right are being taken away from evil and are given peace. Those who live as God wants find rest in death.” NCV

Death is God’s way of taking people away from evil. From what kind of evil? An extended disease, an addiction, a dark season of rebellion? We don’t know!

But we do know that no person lives one day more or less than God intends - Psalm 139:16 - “All the days planned for me were written in your book before I was one day old.” NCV

“But her days here were so few! His life was so brief!” To us it seems that way. We speak of a short life, but compared to eternity, who has a long one? A person’s days on earth may appear as a drop in the ocean. Yours and mine may seem like a thimbleful. But compared to the Pacific of eternity, even the years of Methuselah filled no more than a glass!
James was not speaking just to the young when he said: **James 4:14** - “Your life is like a mist. You can see it for a short time, but then it goes away.” NCV

In God’s eyes, no matter how long you live, it’s short: **Psalm 103:15-16** - “Our days on earth are like grass; like wildflowers, we bloom and die. The wind blows, and we are gone - as though we had never been here.” NLT

**Psalm 90:10** – “Seventy years are given to us! Some even live to eighty. But even the best years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we fly away.” NLT

In God’s plan every life is long enough and every death is timely. And though you and I might wish for a longer life, God knows better.

And - this is important - though you and I may wish a longer life for our loved ones, they don’t. Ironically, the first to accept God’s decision of death is the one who dies. While we are shaking our heads in disbelief, they are laying their heads on Abraham’s Bosom; while we are mourning at a grave, they are rejoicing with those who have gone before; while we are questioning God, they are praising God.

That’s why we should not think of death as the end, but rather the beginning of a wonderful life. Christians don’t lose in their death, they gain a better existence. Death is not the closing of a door for a Christian; it is the opening of the gate that leads to eternity.

Grief, yes, but rejoicing for the ones who have died. This mindset is only possible if you are in Christ Jesus.

**Revelation 7:16-17**: “They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” NKJV

**II. Strong faith**

Many people are afraid of dying! Dying is the last and the least thing a Christian has to be anxious about.

Through His resurrection, Jesus delivered all mankind from the need to fear death – only unbelievers need to fear it:

**1 Corinthians 15:57** – “But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.” NKJV

**Hebrews 2:14-15**: “Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.” NLT

King David wasn’t afraid to die, we shouldn’t be either: **Psalm 23:4** – “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” NKJV

How does a strong faith help the Christian to not be afraid of death?

**First,** it gives assurance of a home above: **2 Corinthians 5:1** – “For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands.” NLT
**Second**, it ends the sting of death: *1 Corinthians 15:54-55*: “Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” NLT

Now, we no longer need to fear death! In England, in the days of Queen Mary, there was a stake that was erected for the burning of two martyrs, one lame the other blind. Just when the fire was lit, the lame man threw his staff down and said to the blind man, “Take courage, brother, this fire will cure us both.” We can say the same of death – where is your sting – is that all you’ve got!

**Third**, it provides the belief in an eternity that is much better that life on the earth: *Philippians 1:22-23*: “But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don’t know which is better. I’m torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me.” NLT

III. To die is gain

**Philippians 1:21** – “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” NKJV

What do we gain in death?

**A better body!** *1 Corinthians 15:51-53*: “But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.” NLT

In this present body we are subject to all the sorrows and tears that life has to offer - age, sickness, and finally death when this body returns to the dust. But in death and the resurrection we gain a better body, one that can never grow old, know disease, suffer pain, or ever die again!

**Revelation 21:4** - “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” NKJV

In heaven, God will not simply dry our tears; He will remove the things that cause our tears – death, sorrow, pain! In heaven there will be no suffering of any kind, which means no heart attacks, cancer, arthritis, diabetes, nor any physical handicaps of any kind. In heaven, our bodies will never hurt again, because God will remove all pain and all sickness for all eternity! In heaven we will know only happiness, because the things of this life that have caused us sorrow will no longer exist!

**Revelation 14:13** - “…Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blessed indeed, for they will rest from their hard work; for their good deeds follow them!” NLT

For now, we can only imagine!

**A better home!** *Hebrews 13:14* – “For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.” NLT
However beautiful our home is here, it will be nothing compared with heaven: John 14:1-3: “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” NKJV

Revelation 22:1-5: “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” NKJV

IV. Conclusion

It is remarkable that the Bible gives us very few deathbed scenes (old or new). No doubt this is because God would have us understand that it is more important how we live than how we die, for life is the main business. As a Christian, we don’t have to be afraid to die – we should welcome it.

Once a dying Christian had another who said, “Farewell, brother, I shall never see you again in the land of the living.” “Oh,” said the dying man, “I shall see you again in the land of the living. This life here is the land of the dying.”

Once a man named Richard Baxter lay dying and his friends came to see him. One friend asked “Dear Mr. Baxter, how are you?” He said, “Almost well.”

The best moment of a Christian’s life is their last one, because it’s the one nearest heaven: Psalm 116:15 – “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints!” NKJV

2 Corinthians 4:16-18: “That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.” NLT

To be prepared to die is to be prepared to live, for it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Are you prepared to die?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” NKJV