

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES
"Facing Death Productively"
(2 Timothy 4:6-22)

Introduction: (To show the need...)

(1) How is a Christian to face death productively?

(2) Ellen Goodman of the Boston Globe recently wrote about the significance of President Bill Clinton's coming appointment of the U.S. Supreme Court--that this appointee will have to face a crucial question about how someone is to **die**. She wrote, "Whoever sits on the highest bench is going to be there when one of the most sensitive issues arrives: the issue of doctor-assisted suicide. The question will come bearing all the moral weight and political heat of the issue of abortion. The decision may be as famous and as fractious as *Roe v. Wade*. Two courts have now issued absolutely opposite opinions about the constitutional right to assisted suicide...In opinion polls, the public is in favor of letting doctors aid the terminally, painfully ill who want to die. But at the voting polls, they have publically rejected initiatives that would make it legal...the furor over the end of life could be every bit as intense as the furor over the beginning of life." (Register-Citizen, May 18, 1994 Editor's Page)

(3) We all know people who have died. Jackie Onassis, the former elegant first lady of the White House who cradled her dying husband's head in her hands at President Kennedy's assassination, passed away this week due to affliction with cancer.

(4) Not long ago, a Christian shared with me that she had just learned that she had a potentially fatal disease. I know of another in our Church family that has a terminal disease. Tuesday evening, someone reported to me how a young relative had suddenly died of an aneurism, creating questions on handling such events with family members...

(5) **Well, does God sanction euthanasia? How far do we go in using medical technology to make terminal patients escape pain? How do we deal with feelings of denial, anger, bartering etc. which plague those who suddenly find that they have less than a year to live? What should a believer do when an unsaved associate suddenly discovers that he has a terminal illness?!** For answers to these questions, we survey the Apostle Paul's example of dying when he **knew** he was on Rome's "Death Row" for the Christian faith in 2 Timothy 4:6-22 ...

(We turn to the "Need Section" of the sermon...)

Need: "Someone I know just learned that they have a terminal disease. They are in shock and denial, and fearing future pain, they are asking about treatment and euthanasia! Any suggestions?!"

I. The Apostle Paul faced his imminent martyrdom as he wrote the Second Epistle of Timothy!

- A. Paul announced that he was soon to die, 2 Timothy 4:6.
- B. This death was imminent as his preliminary hearing had already occurred according to 2 Timothy 4:16-17 (Ryrie St. Bib., KJV ftn.).

II. We examine Paul's closing remarks in 2 Timothy 4:6-22 to see how to face one's death with spiritual productivity:

- A. Item One - To face death productively, we must relate well to God :
 - 1. Paul was not afraid of the **results** of dying:
 - a. He was a true Christian, having trusted in Jesus Christ as his Savior from sin to be headed for heaven, 1 T. 1:12ff; Jn. 3:16.
 - b. Paul obeyed God in his life so that he anticipated rewards beyond dying instead of loving this world, 2 Tim. 6:6, 7-8,10a. He'd been ready for death's results throughout his ministry! **Please Note: Even if we have not walked with God throughout life, it is still profitable for us to repent: Samson truly repented the last moments of life and he is listed as a hero in Hebrews 11:32-33 (cf. Jud. 13:5; 16:27ff).**
 - 2. Neither did Paul have a problem with **dying** itself: he skipped the **usual** stages of denial, anger, and withdrawal that dying people have, for by leaning on the Holy Spirit, Paul enjoyed God's energizing to **keep working** in **this** life, 4:16-18 & 2:1; 1:14.
- B. Item Two - To face death productively, we must let our relationship with God effect how we relate to others :
 - 1. Because he related well with God, Paul still reached out to help others, 4:9-11a,12,13,19. (We can minister to others by arranging our wills, making final pleas, etc. as well!)
 - 2. Because of his relationship with God, Paul sought relationship reconciliation regarding an old "sore spot" in relationships:
 - a. John Mark had been unfaithful in missionary work, causing Paul to desire to leave him out of other efforts, cf. A. 15:36ff.
 - b. Now, **after adjustments had been made by John Mark**, Paul, near death, reconciled with John Mark, 2 Tim. 4:11b.

3. Because of his relationship with God, Paul still helped others until his death, cf. 2 Tim. 4:11b,13b,14-15,17b,21b-22.
- C. Item Three - To face death productively, we must let our relationship with God affect how we relate to ourselves :
1. Paul realized that God did not always desire to salvage him or any other believer from calamity; thus, he could accept death:
 - a. Paul displayed God's spiritual enabling to raise a man from death in the Acts 20:9-12 event.
 - b. However, before this imprisonment, Paul left a man named Trophimus ill when he sailed from Miletus, 2 Tim. 6:20b.
 - c. Though Paul **believed** that God **could** reverse current events, he yet yielded to death as being God's will at the time, 4:6,16ff.
 2. Paul's actions reveal that euthanasia is unacceptable:
 - a. When Paul wrote 2 Timothy, it was autumn, 2 Tim. 4:21a, 9.
 - b. Accordingly, Paul urged Timothy to bring his "cloak" (KJV), or *phailonays*, a "thick upper garment" to stay healthy in the cold autumn prison, Liddell & Scott, Grk.-Eng. Lex., p. 1912.
 - c. Though facing death anyway, Paul still chose to stay healthy and not **promote** his death in clear opposition to euthanasia!
 3. Paul sought sensible physical comfort while facing death:
 - a. The fact that Paul desired a coat for warmth though he faced death supplies input about the **comfort** of those who face death:
 - b. Summarily, God expects believers who face painful deaths to be sensible in using drugs for reasonable physical comfort!

Application: *To face death productively, one must (1) believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior from sin to escape Hell and enter Heaven when he dies, Jn. 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:8.* (2) *Then, as a believer, he must keep his sins confessed to God (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) rely on the Holy Spirit for enabling to (c) obey Scripture, Gal. 5:16-23; 1 Jn. 2:3-6.* (3) *If we wish to minister to someone else who is dying, disciple him in the steps mentioned above!*

Lesson: *Though death is an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), if we relate rightly with God, we will be ready to face it graciously and productively.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message...)

The former Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop, reported in a brochure on death and the medical profession how his practice of working with children brought him face to face with handling death:

He reported that there is a special kind of terminal cancer that children can experience that if treated prolongs life for 18 months, but leaves the child dying an excruciating death. If the disease is not approached with chemotherapy, the child dies in six months, but with no discomfort of pain from the cancer itself.

Dr. Koop, a Christian, does not believe in euthanasia, so he never advocates the intentional taking of life. But he reported that it was his advice to parents of children afflicted with this kind of cancer **not to seek chemotherapy**. In this way, the disease would be allowed to take the child's life in a shorter time, but in a way that respects the child's comfort.

To explain his advice, Dr. Koop then gives his personal beliefs behind his input as a witnessing tool. He explains his Christian value of human life and of human comfort for the dying. This can lead to an effective witness of faith both to unsaved parents and to their terminally ill children.

Like C. Everett Koop, we need to use the subject of death and dying as an opportunity to open the door for an effective discipleship of the needy. We have the hope--news that heaven awaits those who exhibit faith in Christ, the Resurrection and the Life. We have the motivation--news of eternal rewards with God in glory by obeying Scripture with what time we have left. We have the balm for the dying process itself--news of relying on the indwelling Holy Spirit for strength to remain productive for Christ right up to the very end.

So, whether we are the party with the prospect of facing an early death, or if we have an associate who needs answers, let us share our good news..!

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