

Paper # 5: On Facing Death (“the last enemy”) and Dying Well

And so ... We come at last to our Section on “*Death and Dying Well*”

So, how do we segue into a section on “*Death and Dying Well*”?

Well, I’ll start with a couple of stories that actually happened ...

First ... Several years ago a fellow Sunday School teacher came to teach our XYZ Sunday School Class [that’s the ‘*Old Folks*’ Sunday School class] and announced that he had just turned 70 ... and proceeded to read Psalm 90:10 ...

“The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by strength they are eighty years ...”

... and then stated – *“We’re not in the fourth quarter. We are in Overtime!”*

One XYZ member said, *“I’m over eighty, so I guess that puts me in “Sudden Death!”*
[Laughter all around]

Second ... A young intern told me of an older friend going to his fortieth high school reunion where several people told him *“Hey, you are really looking good!”* He thought about it and felt pretty good until he got home and realized that what his old friends were really saying was ...

“You haven’t deteriorated near as much as I thought you would have by this time.”

Well, both of those statements are true. We are getting older and we are declining from our once very robust appearance!

Death and deterioration (for lack of a better word) are part of the natural FALLEN order of things. And to be blunt about it, every human being is on Death Row, with the date of their death having been fixed from before the foundation of the world.

The “good” news, as we will come to see in the next few lessons, is that the Christian should not be fearful or apprehensive about death at all but should actually come to embrace it with joyful anticipation. We will show you why and how this can be done.

One thing that we need to do at this point in our course is to be sure to make a distinction between “*Death*” and the “*Dying Process*” – which are two related, but separate, events.

Some of us will die suddenly and unexpectedly, but most will go through a “*dying process*”. In the dying process, whether death comes by a sudden shock (we find out we are very sick and perhaps have only a few weeks or months left to live) or whether death comes gradually by the frailties, diseases, and debilitations of old age ... the questions, fears and doubts will be much the same.

We should note that the individual Christian’s death is very important to God, who, like any good parent, delights in the homecoming of His children ...

*“Precious in the sight of the LORD
Is the death of His saints.” (Psalm 116:15)*

So, what is it, really, to the Christian – to die?

We would note first that our spiritual union with our Lord Jesus Christ is so deeply and firmly established that even in death the Bible tells us that we “*sleep in Jesus*” and are “*the dead in Christ*”. And so, because the dead Christian “*sleeps in Jesus*” and is “*dead in Christ*”, we can, therefore, truthfully and enthusiastically say with Paul ...

“Death is swallowed up in victory.

*O Death, where is your sting?
O Hades, where is your victory?” (I Corinthians 15:54-55)*

The Christian is not descending down into some kind of a dread Sheol or Gehenna, but ascending up to “*the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matthew 25:34), rising upward to paradise – following the path set by our Lord at His ascension

Always keep before you, Christian, in your dying process, that God has removed the sting of death, nailing it to the cross of Jesus, and has made a spectacle of both death and the devil ...

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of the requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:13-15)

Indeed, for the Christian, death itself is no longer viewed as the penalty of sin because that penalty has already been paid for us by Christ. No! For the Christian – Death is but a

moment of transition from this world to the next. We but shut our eyes in this world to immediately awake in the presence of our Lord to unimagined joy and happiness.

So, let's take up the topics of ...

“Facing Death – The last enemy” and “Dying Well”

In this Section of our overall course, our goals are to show that there is no reason whatsoever for the Christian to fear death, but, rather, that he should embrace it as the wonderful portal to the presence of our Lord. Among other things ...

We will look at how the Christian *should* view death, “*the last enemy*”, when he comes face to face with its approaching reality – when death is no longer far off and vague, but near and real. And we will look at “Why?” the way we *should* view approaching death is quite often not the way that we do approach it.

We will learn how to prepare ourselves to confront and successfully handle the times of fear, depression, despair, and doubts of God's love and of our own salvation that often accompany and are a part of the dying process.

We will learn how to experience the ... “*joy of our salvation*” ... “*the peace that passes all understanding*” ... and the rich and wonderful blessings of ‘*serving God to the very end*’ ... throughout the entire dying process.

So – How should the Christian view death?

As in all other matters, the Christian should always go to their Bible to get their information and answers – and two very clear things that the Bible teaches us about “*death*” are ...

First, that death has had both its “*sting*” and its “*victory*” removed by our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”

*'O death, where is your sting?
O hades, where is your victory?'*

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:50-57)

The second clear teaching of the Bible concerning death is that death itself is "under the feet" of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to "destroy" both "death" itself and "him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and" ... [read this last part very carefully] ... "release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

"For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For 'He has put all things under His feet.'" (1 Corinthians 15:25-27)

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hebrews 2:14-15)

So ... for the Christian ...

Death *should not be* the dreadful and foreboding apparition that it is made out to be.

No, for the Christian, death is simply going to be with Jesus. Our Lord Himself prayed to the Father on the night before He died for us ...

"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me be with Me where I am" (Jesus Christ, John 17:24)

And the Father will most certainly "hear" Him and grant His desire. This, again, is why the Bible teaches us that the dead Christian "sleeps in Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:14) and is "dead in Christ" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). What could be more comforting and reassuring as we approach death than to know that in death we "sleep in Jesus" and are "dead in Christ"?

And so, we see that for the believer both death and the dying process *should actually be* a blessed and much anticipated event.

For one thing, we know that our death itself will come at the time of God's own choosing – and, will therefore come at the best and most perfect time for it.

For another thing, did not our Lord Himself also tell us ...

“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.” (John 14:1-3)

Can we not simply trust our Lord Jesus and have faith that what He says is so?

And so, at death you very simply “enter into the joy of your Lord”.

Just pause, Christian, and think for a minute about what happens to you on the other side of that final river that we all have to cross ...

Your trials and sufferings are at an end ...

All sin is removed from you ...

You are clothed in the righteousness of Christ and stand faultless before God’s throne

Every tear is wiped away from your eye ...

Both your body and soul are made perfect ...

You shall behold our blessed Savior face-to-face...

You shall enter into vast and rapturous happiness and eternal joy, rejoicing and singing out the praises of Him who died for you ...

You will meet again with departed loved ones, friends, relatives ...

You will look forward to being “*glorified*” with our Lord Jesus ...

and you will experience much more beyond anything you had ever hoped or imagined.

Even if you must go through a lengthy and painful “dying process”, it is because God Himself has decreed it for you, instead of a quick and sudden death. Exactly “*Why?*” He might have done that, we cannot say for sure, but, whatever His reason, we do know that it is for your benefit and His glory – and that He is worthy of your trust.

Think about it this way –

God has, in your short time remaining on earth, given you one last really great and wonderful opportunity to serve Him and do holy work for Him by your witnessing to others of your faith and trust in Him as you go through the dying process. It is really a wonderful thought that He cared and thought enough of you to allow you to do that for Him.

And, that, my Christian friend, is “*How the Christian Should View Death*”.

But, sadly, despite the way the death process *should be* viewed by the Christian, even strong Christians will likely face times of fear, depression, despair, and come to have doubts of God’s love for them and perhaps even come to question their own salvation.

Again, this is exactly what we are seeking to avoid in this class.

Fears and doubts happen because ...

even when approaching death, the Christian fails to fully appreciate that he continues to be engaged in a major and relentless spiritual warfare, now even more so than before. When death comes and stares one directly in the face, both the shock of it and our old natural fear of death unsettle us because we have likely prepared very little, if at all, for it.

Facing death will be a battle. When we enter into our dying process, we will have to fight our very formidable triad of old enemies – the “*world*”, the “*flesh*”, and “*the devil*” – which always have, and always will, up to the very end, seek to undermine our Christian faith and trust in God. Though these enemies know that they cannot snatch your salvation from you, they will nonetheless seek to make you think they can and trouble you in many other ways in order to diminish your Christian witness to others, cause your faith and trust in God to waver, and, hopefully for them, sink you as far as they possibly can into a whirlpool of doubt, despair and depression.

And they will do so – IF YOU LET THEM.

How, then, do we prepare ourselves to confront our three archenemies and successfully handle the times of fear, depression, despair, and doubts of God’s love and of our own salvation that so often accompany and are a part of the dying process?

Well, there are Five “Strategy” Steps you have to follow ...

Step 1 – You first have to realize, and always keep in mind, that you are in a very hot and active spiritual WAR!

Step 2 – You have to, as in every war, “*know your enemy*” and what to expect from him.

Step 3 – You have to fully accept and take to heart the teaching of our Lord that you can accomplish absolutely “*nothing*” in this war on your own, and that you desperately need His help at every moment.

Step 4 – You have to learn to consistently and regularly use *both* the offensive and defensive “weapons” that God has given you for fighting this war against the “*world*”, the “*flesh*”, and the “*devil*”.

Step 5 – In addition to diligently using the “Weapons” that God has given you to fight this war, you also have to learn to consistently use and employ the Other Resources” that God has given you – which are the promises and teachings of His word concerning death.

It is only by diligently and regularly using your “*Weapons*” and “*Other Resources*” that you can experience and maintain “*the joy of your salvation*” ... *the peace that passes all understanding* ... and *the rich and wonderful blessings of serving God to the very end*”.

So, let’s get started

Step 1 of our spiritual warfare strategy is ...

To realize, understand and always keep in mind, that you are in a very hot and active spiritual WAR!

Going through the dying process will be a spiritual struggle, a spiritual fight, a spiritual war. You have actually been in this war all of your Christian life. Indeed, even before becoming a Christian, your soul was at war within you, but you did not recognize that you were in a war, because you were at that time a willing member of the enemy camp. But now God has plucked you out of the enemy camp, redeemed you by Christ’s blood, covered you with the righteousness of Christ, and adopted you into His family

Step 2 in our spiritual warfare strategy is ...

To “*know your enemy*” and what to expect from him.

As in all wars, it is vital for you to know your enemies and their likely plan of attack. During your adjustment to, acceptance of, and actual passage through the dying process itself, you will most certainly come under attack from all three of your old archenemies – the “*world*”, the “*flesh*” and the “*devil*”.

To make sure that we are together on what we are talking about here ...

The “*world*” – theologically speaking – is comprised of the powers and forces that oppose God ...

“Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world.” (1 John 2:15-16)

The “*world*” will present you with misrepresentations of what death itself is, of what it is like, of what really follows death, and of what God Himself is like, depicting Him, depending on circumstances, as a doting old grandfather who will wink at sin and let everyone in at the end or as a merciless tyrant unwilling to forgive.

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The “*flesh*”, also known as “*the old nature*” or “*the old man*”, is comprised of the broken remnants of our old and defeated unregenerate sin nature that remain within us. Christ has broken the dominion of sin over us and given us the ability to master it, but the shattered remnants of the old nature remain within us and are still very powerful. Paul warns us in Galatians ...

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” (Galatians 5:17)

Paul writes about his own intense struggle with “*the flesh*” in Romans 7:13-25.

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The “*devil*”, fully recognizing the tendencies of “*the flesh*”, will, throughout your entire dying process, seek to move you into periods of fear, depression, despair, and doubt of God’s love for you and of your own salvation itself. He very often depicts God as a merciless tyrant unwilling to forgive.

As stated earlier, the “*devil*” knows that he cannot snatch you out of the Father’s hand, but he will still try to make you think that he can, or that he already has. But, again, even though

the “*devil*” cannot snatch your salvation from you, he will seek to diminish or prevent your Christian witness and testimony to others, destroy your assurance of salvation, destroy your faith and trust in God and, as much as possible, seek to sink you into an ever-deepening whirlpool of fear and despair and in order to rob you of the “*joy of your salvation*” and your “*peace that passes all understanding*”.

The “*devil*” is very powerful and formidable enemy, and should not be underestimated or trivialized. The Bible warns us concerning the devil ...

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

Do not underestimate or treat him as less than he is.

So, given this formidable triad of evil that is arrayed against you –

How are you, as a Christian, going to be able to withstand and overcome it? How are you going to be able to confidently say with David ...

*“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.” (Psalm 23:4)*

This is where Steps 3, 4, and 5 of our Spiritual Warfare Strategy come in ...

Step 3 tells us that ...

To successfully fight this war, you have to fully take to heart the teaching of our Lord that you can accomplish absolutely “*nothing*” in this war on your own, and that you desperately need His help at every moment.

It is extremely important that you thoroughly understand that You cannot fight this war by yourself.

No! Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself has very plainly and very simply told us ...

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to

you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit in and of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:1-5)

Hear that well, Christian. According to our Lord Jesus Christ, the sum total of all the spiritual good and success that you can achieve *on your own* is ... “nothing”.

I hope that no part of “*nothing*” is unclear to you!

Again, whether fighting against sin, doing good works for God and His church, or waging spiritual war throughout your dying process – You can do “*nothing*” spiritually worthwhile on your own. We cannot overstate the importance of thoroughly understanding this, so, please, read our Lord’s words one more time ...

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

Step 4 of our successful spiritual warfare strategy tells us that ...

You have to learn to consistently and regularly use *both* the offensive and defensive “*weapons*” that God has given you for fighting this war against the “*world*”, the “*flesh*”, and the “*devil*”.

Knowing that you can accomplish “*nothing*” on your own, God, good Father that He is, has left you both *offensive* and *defensive* “*weapons*” by which you might fight and prevail.

These “*weapons*” are “*the means of grace*” and “*the spiritual armor of God*”. We will look more closely at each of them shortly.

Step 5 tells us that if you are to wage a successful spiritual warfare strategy ...

You also have to learn to consistently use and employ your “*Other Resources*” that God has given you.

More will also be said on our “*Other Resources*” shortly.

Again, diligently using these Five Strategic Steps is the only way that you can successfully experience and maintain ... “*the joy of your salvation*” ... “*the peace that passes all understanding*” ... and “*the rich and wonderful blessings of serving God to the very end*”.

So, let's look a little more closely at the "Weapons" and "Other Resources" that God has given us – What they are and how to use them most effectively.

First ... Let's Look at Our "Weapons"

God has given us both *offensive* and *defensive* weapons to combat the times of fear, depression, despair, and doubts of God's love and of our own salvation that often accompany the dying process. The weapons are actually the same weapons that you should have been using all along – the "means of grace" and the "whole armor of God".

We might say that the "*means of grace*" are somewhat more *offensive* in nature and that the "*whole armor of God*" is somewhat more *defensive* in nature. Though both the "*means of grace*" and the "*armor of God*" are directed at all three of our archenemies, the "*means of grace*" are primarily directed against the "*the world*" and "*the flesh*", while putting on "*the whole armor of God*" is directed primarily against "*the devil*".

The "means of grace"

... are the ways in which God extends His grace to us and we receive it from Him. The two chief elements of the "*means of grace*" would be Bible reading and prayer.

Bible "*reading*" would also include Bible *meditation* and *study*. Christian Bible meditation is not like mystical Eastern meditation, but is simply going beyond a mere reading of the Bible to immersing ourselves in the text and thinking through what we are reading and how it applies to us. It is mainly through Bible reading, meditation and study that God speaks to our hearts and sanctifies us. Our Lord Jesus Himself testified to this in His prayer to His Father concerning His disciples, when He asked Him to ...

"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." (John 17:17)

Prayer (in which we speak to God) is the other chief element of the means of grace.

There are other means of grace, besides Bible reading and prayer – including, among others, participation in the sacraments and corporate, family, and private worship – which, taken all together, are the chief means of successfully overcoming temptation, progressing in sanctification, and fighting the final "good" fight with "the last enemy".

The "whole armor of God"

... and the need to put it on is given in Ephesians 6:10-18 ...

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:10-18)

How can we most effectively use our spiritual “weapons”?

We have seen that we can do “nothing” on our own.

But we have also seen that we can “bear much fruit” if we “abide” in Christ. So, to be successful in our spiritual warfare, we must strive to “abide” in Christ.

OK. But, how do we “abide” in Christ?

We “abide” in Christ by “drawing near” to Him through the “means of grace”. That is God’s promise to us ...

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” (James 4:8)

We “draw near to God” by a diligent and regular use of the “means of grace” and by putting on the “whole armor of God” to defend against the fierce attacks of Satan and to help us be steadfast in our pursuit of the means of grace.

Again, because it is so important, to successfully implement our “strategy” in this war, we always need to remember three things ...

First, you can do “nothing” on your own and must “abide” in Christ through a diligent use of the *means of grace* and putting on the *spiritual armor of God* if you are to be successful

Second, we need to approach this warfare very seriously. Paul actually tells us that we are to approach it “*with fear and trembling*” ...

“... *work out you own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:12-13).

The phrase “*fear and trembling*” means “*Don’t take this lightly!*”

Third, you should never underestimate the strength and cunning of our enemy. The Bible terms “*your adversary the devil*” to be “*a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). Again, never consider him to be anything less than that.

Daily consistency in the use of your weapons is vitally important because throughout your “*dying process*” fight with “*death, the last enemy*”, you will be either advancing or sliding back. There is no safe or neutral resting ground in this fight.

In sum ...

... if, in His wisdom, for reasons known only to Himself, God has given you a “*dying process*” rather than a sudden and quick death, He has also given you a final and wonderful opportunity to serve Him, witness to others, glorify His name and store up even more treasure in heaven – and you do not want to squander or waste any part of your final “opportunity-time” battling with old enemies who can be readily subdued by the *weapons* and *resources* at your disposal.

The devil and the flesh are formidable adversaries, but God has promised that we can keep them at bay through a constant use of the means of grace and putting on His spiritual armor.

So, let’s do it.

Let’s unremittingly utilize the means of grace, put on God’s spiritual armor, and store up God’s “Resource Truths” in our memories (more on this below) in order to make the very best and fullest use of our wonderful, and last, God-given opportunity to do holy work for Him while in the flesh. And, all the while, let us keep in mind the wonderful thought that even now, standing on the bank of the final river that we must all cross, we can still render great service and testimony to our God who has done so much for us!

As mentioned above, we also have “Other Resources” for fighting this “War”

Using our God-given “*Weapons*” to prepare for the war ahead is only part of our overall battle strategy. We also have “*Other Resources*” that God has given us to help us maintain “*the joy of our salvation*”, “*the peace that passes all understanding*”, and “*the rich and wonderful blessings of serving God to the very end*”.

Our “*Other Resources*” are the direct Promises and Teachings of the word of God.

We list 17 of them for you below.

Most of God’s “*Promises*” can be stated in one or two verses. Biblical “*Teachings*”, on the other hand, will more likely encompass a couple of paragraphs on a given subject. Both the “*Promises*” and key verses of the “*Teachings*” should be committed to memory so as to be readily available, at a moment’s notice, whenever needed.

One of the most successful stratagems that Satan uses to trouble us in our dying process is to cast doubt and confusion upon the certainty of our relationship with God and to try to convince us that we either can, or have, lost our salvation. He tries to undermine our assurance of our salvation by relentlessly bringing our failings before us, and masterfully blurring the distinction between “*reigning sin*” in unbelievers and the struggle against the broken and defeated remnants of “*surviving sin*” that remain in true believers. He is not called “*the accuser of the brethren*” for nothing (*Revelation 12:10*).

Storing up the *promises and teachings* of God (i.e., the “*truths*” of God) in our memory, to be readily available when needed, is a “*must*” if we are to successfully parry aside the attacks of Satan and prevail in our “dying process” fight.

**We will first list our 17 “Resource Truths” in short form and then
look a little more deeply at each of them separately**

Among the precious “Promises” and “Teachings” of the word of God to help comfort and sustain us as we face death and the “dying process” are ...

1. The “truth” that you may “know” that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13; John 3:36; John 5:24)
2. The companion “truth” that God *knows* right now those who are *eternally* His (2 Timothy 2:19)
3. The “truth” that God has promised His children final “*victory*” in their struggle with death (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

4. The “truth” that God has promised His children ongoing help and success throughout the “dying process” if they will only “*draw near*” to Him (James 4:8)
5. The “truth” that the foundational basis of your salvation is the righteousness of Christ imputed to your account and not what you do (2 Corinthians 5:21)
6. The “truth” that your salvation is a chain of unbreakable, certain, and indissoluble God-forged and God-linked events that are sure to occur (Romans 8: 29-30)
7. The “truth” that neither man nor devil can ever bring a sustainable charge against any of God’s elect (Romans 8: 31-34)
8. The “truth” that nothing shall ever be able to “*separate us from the love of Christ*” (Romans 8:35)
9. The “truth” that nothing “*shall be able to separate us from the love of God*” (Romans 8:38-39)
10. The clear promise of God’s word that ...

*“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”
(Romans 8:1)*

11. The “truth” that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself has promised us that our place in heaven is already reserved for us and that He is waiting there to “receive” us to Himself (John 14:1-3)
12. The “truth” that our Lord prayed on the night of His betrayal ...

“Father, I desire that they also whom you gave Me may be with Me where I am” (John 17:14).

... and that God the Father always hears and answers His Son’s request

13. The “truth” that no one can “*snatch*” you (i.e., ‘remove’ you) out of the hand of Jesus (John 10: 27-28)
14. The “truth” that no one can “*snatch*” you (i.e., ‘remove’ you) out of the hand of God the Father (John 10: 29-30)

15. The “truth” that God Himself will “*keep*” you through both death and the dying process struggle (1 Peter 1:3-5)
16. The “truth” that you yourself have been personally “*sealed for the day of redemption*” by the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit Himself is the “*Guarantor*” of your salvation. (Ephesians 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 2 Corinthians 5:5)
17. That “*death*” itself is “*under the feet*” of our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to “*destroy*” not only “*death*” itself, but also “*him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*” (1 Corinthians 15:25-26; Hebrews 2:14-15)

These seventeen truths from the Bible (and there are many others besides these) should fully convince you that have absolutely nothing to fear from death. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can be more certain and dependable than these promises and teachings from the word of God

“For the mouth of the LORD has spoken it” (Isaiah 40:5)

We would also note in closing out our “Resource Truths” section, that our Lord, when He underwent His great period of temptation by Satan, did not try to reason or argue with him. No, He instead quoted Scripture that He had memorized to him. We should do the same!

**And so, we have listed Seventeen Biblical “Promises” and “Teachings” –
Seventeen Biblical Truths – to help comfort and sustain us
as we face both death and the dying process.**

Let’s look a little deeper into each of them:

Our first and very important Biblical teaching to help comfort and sustain us as we face our death and the dying process is ...

1. The teaching that you may “*know*” that you have eternal life.

By far, the greatest comfort that you can have as you face death and the dying process is to “*know* *that you have eternal life*” ...

We are told very clearly by the Apostle John ...

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:13)

Here we see that it is the Christian’s birthright to “know that you have eternal life” – not think, or hope, or presume that you have “eternal life” – but “know” that you actually have it.

Confirm also ...

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life” (John 3:36)

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” (John 5:24)

[Note: Our next two papers will be “On Having a Full Assurance of Your Salvation” and “How Can I Know for Sure that I am a Christian?”]

Our second confirming and companion Biblical Truth to Number One is ...

2. That God knows right now those who are eternally His.

He knows it by His own immutable decree ...

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Christ Jesus to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:3-6)

Indeed, God’s knowledge of “those who are His” is so sure and certain that it is referred to in the Bible as the “solid foundation” and “seal” of God Himself ...

“Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’” (2 Timothy 2:19).

Again, God knows those “*who are His*”. He knows it right now and has known it “*from the foundation of the world*”.

He does not have to await man’s decision on the matter. He does not have to pathetically “*peek ahead*” like some kind of cosmic cheat to see man’s decision so He can ratify it as His own – the very thought of which does great and irreparable damage to any concept of God’s sovereignty and omniscience.

No! “*The Lord knows those who are His*”! Not those who “*might be*” His ... but “*those who are His*”! And He knows it right now! And nothing can change it! If you are “*His*” now, you will be “*His*” forever – for it is His “*solid foundation and seal*”. You cannot be lost along the way. Your salvation is assured

A third very comforting and sustaining Biblical truth is ...

3. That God has promised His children final “*victory*” in their struggle with death

“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be bought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’

*‘O death, where is your sting?
O hades, where is your victory?’*

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Corinthians 15:54-57)

The battle with our old archenemies will be intense. There will be strong assaults from Satan, accompanied by the last strong, gasping impulses of “*the flesh*”. But it is all made so much more bearable by the assurance and knowledge from God of our final “*victory*” – a “*victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*.”

One might well ask, “If ‘*victory*’ is certain, then why are Christians sometimes afraid to die?”

We will give you both a “general” and a “specific” answer to that question.

The general answer is that our *own* death is a very foreboding topic for us and most of us will have never thought very deeply about it until it is thrust upon us. Oh, we may have made funeral pre-arrangements and such, and even talked about it some, but, even then,

death was not imminent, but somewhere out in the future, a long way off. So, when we are suddenly confronted by it, we have not adequately thought through and prepared ourselves for it – and, as a result, we have many unresolved fears and unknowns that pop up squarely before us – thoughts like, *I am actually going to die! My life as I know it will cease to exist! I will leave my loved ones and my entire known world behind! My body will be put in a box and laid six feet under the ground!* – all of which are very threatening, scary, and depressing thoughts.

Taking advantage of our general lack of preparedness to face our own deaths, two of our three lifelong enemies, the flesh and the devil, will, as mentioned above, play on any uncertainties or doubts that you may have, or introduce them to you afresh if you do not presently have them.

The devil, especially, will relentlessly parade all the sins and failings of your lifetime before you and try to convince you ... that you were never really saved in the first place ... that your Christian past has been nothing more than one great hypocrisy after another ... and that you are beyond hope. Again, he knows that he cannot take your salvation away from you, but he does very much wish to destroy your peace and trust in God and especially wants to inhibit any Christian testimony or witness that you might give to others.

Natural unregenerate men have every reason to fear death. Unless they have totally suppressed their innate knowledge of God and His law to the point of thoroughly searing their consciences, natural unregenerate men innately know that there is a God, that there is a judgment to come, and that they are sinners. Fear of death is the natural preserve of the unregenerate, not the Christian.

That is our general answer.

Our specific answer to the question “*If ‘victory’ is certain, then why are we, even as Christians, afraid to die?*” is that the Christian, who need have no fear of death, comes to fear death because, even at this time in their lives, they tend to neglect the means of grace and get their eyes off of Jesus and His imputed righteousness as the foundational basis of their salvation and turn them onto themselves, thereby setting themselves up for sure depression and defeat.

So, in sum, even as Christians who have been promised “*victory*” in our death process struggles, we sometimes become troubled and doubtful not only because of our *general* unpreparedness for facing death and the dying process, but also because, even at this late stage, we *specifically* tend to weaken ourselves through neglect of the means of grace and putting on the armor of God and not committing the promises and teachings of our “Resource Truths” to memory.

***Very importantly, all of these pitfalls can be easily overcome
by a constant and diligent use of the means of grace.***

It is a fact of nature that all living things need to be maintained, nourished, and renewed if they are to bear fruit and survive – Trees and plants and our own bodies, for example, need to be watered and fed nutrients daily or they will grow increasingly weak.

The same is true of our spiritual life. Again, it was our Lord Jesus Himself who said ...

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit in and of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4-5)

The “fruit” of which our Lord speaks is the “fruit of the Spirit” which is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22).

The amount of this good “fruit” that you can produce and maintain on your own is, again, according to our Lord, “nothing”.

Even worse, not only will you not produce any good fruit on your own, but it is axiomatic that if by neglect of the means of grace you allow the Spirit’s influence to grow weaker, the influence of both the “flesh” and the devil will correspondingly gain strength. So, it is an inevitable certainty that to the extent that you neglect the means of grace you open yourself up to the assaults of hell and the periodic agonies of depression, despair and doubt that accompany death and the dying process.

But, again, thank God, we have also been told that by “abiding” in our Lord Jesus Christ, we can not only overcome our enemies but can also “bear much fruit”.

***And so, the solution to our problem of successfully waging our spiritual warfare
is as simple as it is clear ...***

We must have daily renewals of grace from God through a diligent use of the means of grace or we will quickly wither on the vine.

Let’s always keep before us God’s promise of final “victory” to spur us on ...

“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Corinthians 15:51-58)

And so, you have been promised “victory”. If you believe it, then act like it, and start using your “weapons” and committing His promises and teachings to memory.

Our fourth Biblical truth is that in addition to “victory” in our struggle ...

4. God has promised His children ongoing help and success throughout the whole “dying process” struggles if they will only “draw near” to Him ...

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8).

It is a set promise of God that the closer you draw to Him, the closer He will draw to you. And, the nearer to God one is, the greater will be their peace, rest, joy, fullness of heart and assurance of salvation.

God has also promised us ...

“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)

Again, we *draw near to God*” and *“resist the devil”* by *“abiding”* in Jesus through the diligent and daily use of the means of grace and putting on the spiritual armor of God. That is the only way to ongoing “victory” throughout our death and dying process.

So, Christian, you have a simple choice set before you as you prepare to face death and/or go through the “dying process”. God, for His part, has promised that the closer you “draw” to Him the closer He will draw to you.

The ball is in your court ...

You can either ... *“walk in the Spirit”* ... *“draw near to God”* ... *“abide in Christ”* and bear the spiritual fruit of *“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control”* ...

OR ...

You can neglect the means of grace and proportionally experience increasing depression, despair and doubt

In the battle ahead, if you effectively utilize the means of grace and the armor of God, you will be successful. If you do not, you will not. *It really is that simple.*

Our fifth, and perhaps most important, truth to remember when facing the dying process is that ...

5. The foundational basis of your salvation is the righteousness of Christ imputed to your account and not what you do ...

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

That the foundational basis of your salvation is the righteousness of Christ imputed to your account and not what you do means that the foundation of your salvation stands outside of yourself and is as absolutely certain and unshakable as the righteousness of Christ Himself! (Confirm Romans 8:31-34)

Always remember that God’s love for you is founded “in Christ Jesus” and that when God looks at you He does not see your sins and actions, but the righteousness of Christ imputed to your account. As a Christian, you are “in Christ” and, therefore, Romans 8:37-39 applies very specifically to you ...

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:37-39)

While going through the dying process ...

... it is extremely important for you to always remember that at the moment you exercised saving faith in Jesus Christ two very amazing things happened to you in the heavenly courts of God’s justice:

First, God the Father, in a full legal and forensic sense, imputed (i.e., accounted or reckoned) all your sins to Christ on the cross – who paid the penalty for them in your place – Such that you are now, and always will be, legally, “*Not Guilty*” before His bar of justice. Confirm ...

“All we like sheep have gone astray;

*We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6)*

Second, God the Father, also in a full legal and forensic sense, legally imputed the righteousness of Christ to your own personal account. This means that when God looks at you (both now and on the Judgment Day), He will not only find you “*Not Guilty*”, but will also behold you clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ ...

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

These twin acts of imputation are the foundation and legal basis for what the Bible refers to as your “*justification*” (i.e., your actual salvation).

So, as good news bears repeating, when you were saved by the grace of God, Jesus Christ not only paid the penalty for all your sins that you might be judged “*Not Guilty*” before God’s tribunal, but Jesus also made you to be clothed with His own righteousness such that when God looks upon you in legal judgment, He beholds the righteousness of Christ imputed to your account and not your own actions and failings.

Again, the foundation of your salvation, i.e., your “justification”, stands outside of yourself and is founded “*in Christ Jesus*”. Keep your eyes fixed on that, Christian, on Jesus and His righteousness imputed to your account as the foundational basis of your salvation, and not on yourself and your failings, and you will be fine.

Our Biblical Truths Numbered 6, 7, 8, and 9, all derive from one master passage:

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall

separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written

*‘For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’*

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:28-39)

In this passage we have four wonderful Biblical truths to help comfort and sustain us as we face death and the dying process ...

We are taught, first, about the wonderful and unbreakable “*Golden Chain*” of our salvation, which stretches from eternity past out into the future – with each link forged and fitted by God Himself

We are taught, second, that neither man nor devil can ever bring a sustainable charge against any of God’s elect

We learn, third, that nothing shall ever be able to “*separate us from the love of Christ*” (Romans 8:35), a love that is akin to God the Father’s love for Him (John 15:9)

And, we learn, fourth, that, likewise, nothing “*shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

Let us look to each of these teachings and promises in turn ...

- 6. We are truly “saved” (i.e., actually transferred from being a “child of wrath” to being a “child of God”) at our justification and subsequent adoption as sons of God. But our Justification and Adoption are only *two links* in a *golden chain* of sequential salvation events, with each link forged and joined to the others by God Himself. As such, your salvation is a chain of unbreakable, certain, and indissoluble, God-forged events that are most sure to occur.**

Paul speaks of such a chain in Romans 8:29-30 ...

“For whom He foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He

predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” (Romans 8: 29-30)

The *chain* of our salvation stretches from God’s *foreknowledge* of us in eternity past out to our as yet to be accomplished *glorification*.

“*Glorification*” is the final link in the chain of our salvation and occurs in the future in heaven. It is noteworthy that even though our *glorification* is yet to come, its certainty is such that Paul speaks of it in the past tense, as if it has already happened – “*and whom He justified, these He also glorified*”. Thus, if you have been “*foreknown*” and “*called*” by God, you cannot be delinked, lost, or somehow dropped from this chain along the way to your ultimate “*glorification*”. To be “*foreknown*” is to be “*glorified*”.

What is incredibly amazing and comforting about the golden chain of our salvation is that all three members of the holy Trinity were, and still are, deeply involved in it ...

God the Father ... Foreknew you, elected you, predestined you, justified you, adopted you into His family, and will one day glorify you ...

God the Son ... Redeemed you by paying the penalty for your sins on the cross, gave His own righteousness as a covering for you, stands even now at the throne of God to make intercession for you, and most glorious of all, has established a firm, unshakable, and very real, spiritual union with you ...

God the Holy Spirit ... as the agent of your “*new birth*”, removed your old “*heart of stone*” and gave you a new “*heart of flesh*”, made you aware of your sin and drove you to Christ for relief and redemption from it. He also gave you the “*gifts*” of “*faith*” and “*repentance*”, has been the agent of your sanctification, actually indwells you, and is Himself the “*guarantee*” and “*seal*” of your salvation (*2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:14*)

Can you reasonably believe that the “*guarantee*” of the Holy Spirit can fail, or that all these things done for and to you by the members of the holy Trinity can be nullified and withdrawn from you? I don’t think so!

7. That no one, neither man nor devil, can ever possibly bring a sustainable “charge” against “God’s elect”, i.e., against a Christian.

Confirm ...

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” (Romans 8:31-34)

Just think, Christian! Think ...

First, *“If God is for us, who can be against us? (v. 31)*

This is a rhetorical question whose answer is self-evident. If God is for us, no one can successfully be against us! [Paul will shortly elaborate on this by telling us that absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God that is *“in Christ Jesus”*.]

Second, *“Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.” (v. 33)*

This is another rhetorical question whose answer is self-evident. Since God Himself is the One who has already legally *“justified”* us by imputing our sins to Christ on the cross and Christ’s righteousness to our account, thereby legally declaring us both “Not Guilty” and “Righteous”, how can anyone (including the very devil himself) ever, in any way, successfully *“charge”* us or hold us legally responsible for any of our sins.

Third, *“Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” (v. 34)*

Let’s just think about this for a moment.

The Judge that *“condemns”* at the last judgment is *“Christ who died”*. Jesus Christ is the Judge at the last judgment. The same Jesus Christ who died to pay the penalty for your sins, who gave His own righteousness as a covering for you and who even now stands and intercedes before God’s throne on your behalf, this same Jesus Christ is the One who is to render the verdict on you at the Last Judgment. This being the case, it is inconceivably foolish to think that anyone or anything could somehow now condemn us.

Talk about a stacked court!

*Two additional, very similar, but different, truths that we learn
from our master passage are ...*

8. That nothing shall ever be able to “separate us from the love of Christ” ...

... and ...

9. That nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God”

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress,
or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written*

*‘For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’*

*“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved
us. For 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the
love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:28-39)*

The “love of Christ” – i.e., the “love” with which Jesus loves you – is the highest
love imaginable and is akin to His Father’s love for Christ Himself ...

*“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you, abide in My love” (John
15:9).*

It is truly astounding that Jesus’s love for each of us, individually, is likened unto His
Father’s love for Him. What a world of comfort and security is to be found here.
This is why Paul can so confidently write ...

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress,
or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written*

*‘For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’*

*“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved
us. For 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39)

What is more, just as we are taught that nothing shall separate us from the “love of Christ” (Romans 8:35), we are also taught that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:39).

Look again at our last passage ...

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written

*‘For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’*

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39)

God the Father’s “love” for you is founded upon your position “in Christ Jesus” and, because of that, Paul “is persuaded that” nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39).

The little phrase “the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” says it all. For it harkens back to Number 3 and tells us afresh that the foundational basis of your salvation is that God’s love for you is a “love” founded or derived “in Christ Jesus our Lord” – and not in you or your actions. Again, the foundational basis of your salvation is “the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

Thus we see again that the foundational basis of your salvation stands outside of yourself, and nothing, absolutely nothing, can ever change it or separate you from “the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

How comforting these verses are to one facing death and struggling with the doubts and fears that often accompany it, for here we are told that nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from “the love of Christ”, the Second Person of the Trinity, or from “the love of God”, the First Person of the Trinity – and this along with our

salvation being “guaranteed” and “sealed” by the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity.

Could anything be more reassuring and comforting than that?

Biblical Truth Number 10, a truth from which we can derive great comfort and assurance, is ...

10. The clear promise of God’s word that ...

***“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”
(Romans 8:1)***

The clearness of this Biblical Truth is such that it needs no further comment.

11. As we face death and the dying process, we also have the consolation and promise of our Lord given in John 14 ...

“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.” (John 14:1-3)

Our Lord tells us here that we already have a place in heaven reserved for us and that He waits to “receive us” to Himself.

This is simply a matter of whether you believe the words of your Lord and Savior or not. Is He worthy of your trust? If so, then “Let not your heart be troubled”.

Another guarantee of our salvation is that ...

12. Our Lord also prayed on the night of His betrayal ...

“Father, I desire that they also whom you gave Me may be with Me where I am” (John 17:14).

Our Lord told us earlier at the tomb of Lazarus that His Father “always hears” Him

“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they believe that You sent Me.’” (John 11:41)

Can you possibly think that God the Father will not listen to His Son, our Lord, in this one case or that He will deny His request to have the people whom He Himself had “given” Him go to “be with Me where I am”?

Confirm God the Father’s gift to His Son ...

“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of this world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.” (John 17:6)

This is but another matter of simple belief in God’s word.

We have another set of very similar, but different, promises of our Lord ...

13. You are promised, first, that no one can “snatch” you (i.e., ‘remove’ you) out of the hand of Jesus ...

14. You are also promised that no one can “snatch” you (i.e., ‘remove’ you) out of the out of the hand of God the Father ...

Confirm both ...

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.” (Jesus Christ, John 10:27-30)

Here, our Lord Jesus Christ very plainly and very clearly tells us ...

That He “*knows*” exactly who His sheep are

That He “*gives them eternal life*”

That “*they shall never perish*”

That no one shall “*snatch them out of My hand*”

That “*no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand*.”

We would also state that the really silly assertion made by many, without any Biblical basis whatsoever, that “*you can take yourself out of His hand*” is very easily refuted by Romans 8:37-39 which clearly states that you yourself (being a “*created thing*”) cannot snatch yourself out of God’s hand ...

“For 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:37-39)

You are a “*created thing*” aren’t you?

Our Fifteenth and Sixteenth “Resource” Truths to help us in and throughout our struggles with Death and the “Dying Process” are the truths that God Himself will “keep” you throughout your dying process fight and that you yourself are personally “sealed for the day of redemption” by the God the Holy Spirit, who is Himself the “Guarantor” of your salvation.

15. God Himself will “keep” you throughout the dying process ...

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:3-5)

16. You are personally “sealed for the day of redemption” by the Holy Spirit who is also the “guarantee” of your salvation ...

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:30)

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

“Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.” (2 Corinthians 5:5)

What a wonderful source of comfort and joy these four thoughts are as we go through the dying process.

Our last Biblical teaching to help us in our “Dying Process” is to ...

17. Always remember that “death” itself is “under the feet” of our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to “destroy” not only “death” itself, but also “him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

“For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” (1 Corinthians 15:25-26)

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Hebrews 2:14-15)

In these verses we see ...

The death of “death” itself – As death has been both “destroyed” and placed “under the feet” of our Lord Jesus Christ

That “the devil” who “has the power of death” has himself been “destroyed”.

That the destruction of the one who “has the power of death” serves to “release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Again, you have been “released” from the “bondage” of the “fear of death”. Do not resubmit yourself to it by misapprehensions and unbelief.

In closing our look at the Christian viewpoint on “Death and Dying Well” ...

There are three things that we would like to REEMPHASIZE for a critically ill Christian to keep in mind ...

First, that Death “*the last enemy*” is an already defeated and “*destroyed*” enemy that you have no reason to “*fear*”.

“For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” (I Corinthians 15:25-26)

Why should we fear something that is “*under the feet*” of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is our federal representative, with whom we are in spiritual union, and from whose “*love*” nothing can ever separate us?

Second, that you have very specifically been “*released*” from the “*fear*” and “*bondage*” of “*death*” by our Lord Jesus Christ ...

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Hebrews 2:14-15)

Do not by unbelief resubmit yourself to the “*bondage*” of the “*fear of death*”. Do not be like a prisoner whose bonds have been loosed and whose cell door has been swung open, but who still sits there because he thinks it too good to be true.

The third point we want to keep in mind when facing death is that death is not the end of life for the Christian, but the beginning of it.

This is very beautifully captured in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians and in our Lord’s discourse with His disciples at the Last Supper as recorded by John.

From Paul’s First letter to the Corinthians, we read ...

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

However the spiritual is not the first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of earth, made of dust; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly man.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’

*‘O death, where is your sting?
O hades, where is your victory?’*

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Corinthians 15:42-57)

In these verses, we see that all human beings, save our Lord Jesus Christ, being naturally descended from our first federal representative, Adam, “*the first man*”, share in the guilt of his sin and fall, and, thereby, must all die. But, as Paul goes on to explain, Christians also have a second and superseding federal head or representative, Jesus Christ, “*the last Adam*”, and are thereby “*in Christ*”. And just as we received our natural bodies, made of dust, from the first Adam, “*the man of dust*”, so we will, at the resurrection of the dead receive an incorruptible body from Christ, “*the last Adam*”, the “*heavenly man*”, and go to be with Him forever.

Christians are not freed from death itself or the grave, because we still have to die and go there. But, being “*in Christ*”, we are freed from the “*sting*” and “*fear*” of death, and the grave is robbed of its “*victory*” over us. And, as death is robbed of its victory, we are given “*victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

That death is but the gateway to the beginning of our new life, a life in which He has already prepared a “place” for us, is also confirmed by our Lord’s discourse with His disciples at the Last Supper ...

“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. And where I go you know, and the way you know.” (John 14:1-4)

Both Paul and our Lord Jesus assure us that a truer and fuller life awaits us on the other side of that last river, “death”. We have only to pass through “*the valley of the shadow of death*”, the “*last enemy*”, an enemy who has already been thoroughly defeated and stripped of its power, an enemy who is even now “*under the feet*” of our Lord Jesus, to enter into it. One short moment of passage – a moment in which we, like David, should “*fear no evil; for You are with me*” – and then we shall see Him as He is, face to face, and reign with Him forever!

THAT, my fellow Christian, is why we can say with David ...

*“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. (Psalm 23:4)*

So, for the Christian, *death* is not a foreboding apprehension to be dreaded and feared.

No, rather, as we said above, for the Christian death is no longer a penalty for sin because Jesus Christ has paid the full penalty for all our sins. Death for the Christian is but a portal through which you very simply “*enter into the joy of your Lord*” ... and where ...

Your trials and sufferings are at an end ... All sin is removed from you ... You are clothed in the righteousness of Christ and stand faultless before God’s throne ... Every tear is wiped away from your eye ... Both your body and soul are made perfect ... You shall behold our blessed Savior ... You shall enter into vast and rapturous happiness and eternal joy, rejoicing and singing out the praises of Him who died for you ... You meet again with departed loved ones, friends, relatives ... You will look forward to being “*glorified*” with our Lord Jesus ... and you will experience much more beyond anything you had ever hoped or imagined ...

So, for the Christian, death should be a moment of grand and wonderful anticipation, a moment of joyful “*victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” - who has already “*prepared a mansion*” for me – and who will be “*with me*” to “*comfort me*” when I “*walk through*” that final “*valley of the shadow of death*”.

So, as our Lord Himself has instructed us ...

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

And so, as death approaches, you have your God-given “weapons” and “other resources” and an “effective battle strategy” by which to be successful in the “dying process” struggle that lies ahead.

This leaves you, Christian, with a simple decision to make for the months that lie ahead as you go through the dying process ...

Will you believe and trust God and His word and prepare for battle to enable you to use this last wonderful opportunity of serving Him and bearing witness to His grace and mercy in your life ...

... OR ...

Will you let yourself be endlessly troubled by the whisperings of Satan, the father of lies, and the dying impulses of the “old man” that remain within?

Hopefully, this is also a rhetorical question with a self-evident answer.

We would conclude our look at *Death and Dying Well* with the words of Charles Spurgeon, commenting on the verse ...

“That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death.” (Hebrews 2:4)

O child of God, death hath lost its sting, because the devil’s power over it is destroyed. Then cease to fear dying. Ask grace from God the Holy Ghost, that by an intimate knowledge and a firm belief in thy Redeemer’s death, thou mayst be strengthened for that dread hour. Living near the cross of Calvary, thou mayest think of death with pleasure, and welcome it when it comes with intense delight. It is sweet to die in the Lord: it is a covenant-blessing to sleep in Jesus. Death is no longer banishment, it is a return from exile, a going home to the many mansions where the loved ones already dwell. The distance between glorified spirits in heaven and militant saints on earth seems great; but it is not so. We are not far from home – a moment will bring us there. The sail is spread; the soul is launched upon the deep. How long will be its voyage? How many wearying winds must beat upon the sail ere it shall be reefed in the port of peace? How long shall that soul be tossed upon the waves before it comes to the sea which knows no storm? Listen to the answer,

“Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” Yon ship has just departed, but it is already at its haven. It did but spread its sail and it was there. Like that ship of old, upon the Lake of Galilee, a storm has tossed it, but Jesus said, “Peace, be still,” and immediately it came to land. Think not that a long period intervenes between the instant of death and the eternity of glory. When the eyes close on earth they open in heaven. The horses of fire are not an instant on the road. Then. O child of God, what is there for thee to fear in death, seeing that through the death of thy Lord its curse and its sting are destroyed? and now it is but a Jacob’s ladder whose foot is in the dark grave, but its top reaches to glory everlasting.” (Charles Spurgeon, Morning & Evening, April 20, Morning)

A Final Thought for the Moment of Death ...

Having been a great reprobate and blaspheming sinner, and, after salvation, a “recovering Pharisee” for a good number of years, I have often thought of what thought I would most like to cling to when the moment of my actual physical death is upon me. What would be the most comforting and reassuring thought for me when the moment of my death arrives?

[Note: This will likely differ from person to person.]

I once read somewhere (I do not remember where or who said it) of someone saying that they would like their last thought before their death to be that it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ credited to their account that is the basis and surety of their salvation, and not what they have done or failed to do.

I fully agree with that and hope and pray to make it my last earthly thought as well.

Four Appendices Follow

Appendix 1 A Review of the book *Between Life and Death: A Gospel-Centered Guide to End-of-Life Medical Care* by Kathryn Butler, MD. I would highly recommend that you get this book and read it.

Appendix 2 Some of the Legal and Other Items that You Should Consider Getting Long Before You Enter the Dying Process

Appendix 3 Information and Free Forms from the South Carolina Bar Association – www.scbbar.org

Appendix 4 Answers to Two Common Death-Related Questions

Is it proper for the Christian to Pray for Death to Come?

Can, or should, Christians cry at Funerals?

Appendix 1: A Review of ...

Between Life and Death: A Gospel-Centered Guide to End-of-Life Medical Care – By Kathryn Butler, MD

Dr. Kathryn Butler is a trauma and critical-care surgeon and a devout Christian with great compassion and concern for critical-care patients and their loved ones. She writes in the *Introduction* to her book ...

“Yet medical technology harbors a dark side. When an illness cannot be cured, aggressive interventions prolong dying, incur suffering, and rob us of our ability to speak with loved ones and with God in our final days. Ventilators steal both voice and consciousness. Resuscitation looks a lot like assault. In the ICU we often awake in pain and find ourselves physically strapped to a foreign bed, deprived of the familiarity and comfort of home. We clamber for air, only to find we have no freedom and no voice.”

Speaking to loved ones serving as caregivers, she writes ...

“When our critically ill loved ones cannot speak to us, we wrestle with impossible decisions of whether to press on or withhold treatment, all the while we yearn to hear a beloved voice again ... such dilemmas thrust us into grief, doubt, fear, anger, and even guilt as we struggle to reconcile a web of instruments with a mother’s voice, a father’s laughter, or a child’s smile. While we wrestle, concerns about faith also haunt us.”

Rather than write my own testimony to the book, I will give you some of the testimonials to the book written by others, which speak much more eloquently than I could ...

“It is inevitable that at some point, each of us will face difficult and even heartbreaking medical decisions. We may have to make decisions related to our own care or, even tougher, the care of someone we love.”

“For all the blessings of modern critical-care, we have not sufficiently reckoned with its dark underside: what happens when medical technology and intervention do not preserve life but prolong death?”

*“How do we best love the sick and dying? How do we know when to pursue medical interventions and when to allow our loved ones to, as Dr. Butler puts it, ‘relax into the embrace of Jesus’? These are complex questions without easy answers. But *Between Life and Death* provides a healthy framework of biblical wisdom to illuminate otherwise murky scenarios. Dr. Butler explains the dense terminology that can baffle already overwhelmed caregivers. And, with unflinching (but not unsympathetic) clarity, she brings us to the bedsides of the suffering and tells us what it is like to experience CPR, a ventilator, or artificially administered nutrition ... we need to know the stark reality in order to make God-honoring and merciful choices for ourselves and loved ones.”*

Chapters 1 and 2 of the book look at “*Framing the Issue*” and “*Wisdom Begins with the Word*”. Chapters 3-9 give “*A Detailed Look at Organ-Supporting Measures*”. Chapter 10-13, and beyond, deal with “*Discernment at Life’s End*”.

Dr. Butler recognizes that we all have and bring different feelings, goals, attributes, circumstances and views on end-of-life decision making to the table and that the choice is ours to make. She only wants to help you make choices that are informed and Biblically-based.

If you yourself are facing a terminal illness, or if you are a spouse, child, close friend or relative of someone who is facing a terminal illness and are likely to become a caregiver and/or caregiving decision maker, you should read this book in its entirety, for you will face decisions regarding ... What your loved one, not you, would have wanted ... Whether various interventions help us on the life-prolonging road to recovery or, if our core illness is irreversible, merely prolong death with undue suffering (in other words, is it life-saving or death-prolonging)?

Advanced care planning guidance is also given, as are discussion or related end-of-life topics.

I would close by giving two other testimonials to the book ...

“Dr. Butler has written a remarkable, unique, and timely book. Combining her medical expertise with Biblical compassion and moral evaluation, she lucidly explains what we need to know about life-and-death medical situations. She does not

offer vague advice, but grounds her counsel in medical facts, legal realities, spiritual principles, and real-life illustrations.”

“Dr. Butler has done a masterful job in giving us a clear and comprehensive guide to navigate the difficult and complex waters of end-of-life care.”

I totally agree with both statements and very highly recommend the book.

Appendix 2: A Listing of ...

Some of the Legal and Other Items that you Should Consider Getting Long Before You Enter the Dying Process.

Wills – Whether you know it or not, you already have a written, legally-valid will. It’s called the Intestate Secession will. If you have not had your own will drawn up when you die, the state of South Carolina (or whatever state you live in) has one for you. And its terms may not be the ones you would have chosen for your beneficiaries.

A Durable Power of Attorney – To appoint someone to administer your affairs if you become incapacitated.

A Health Care Power of Attorney – To appoint someone to make health care decisions for you if you become incapacitated [Note: You can set specific limits on all aspects of health care.]

A Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care – Lasts longer and provides for successors if the one appointed by you to make these decisions should die.

A Declaration of a Desire for a Natural Death (aka “Living Will”) – This is a very important document. You set all the specifications yourself.

Long-Term Care Insurance – Medicare does not provide for Long-Term Care. Policies vary greatly and can be handled so as to reduce their cost.

NOTE: This is not and does not claim to be a full listing of all needed and necessary death or health care related documents

You can see some of these forms at: www.scbar.org ... Browse Common topics ... Free Forms and Publications ... Check out: Resources for Seniors, Advance Directive Forms, and Children's Issues (if you have a Special Needs child).

Appendix 3: Information and Free Forms from the South Carolina Bar Association

Note: You can explore the whole website, but look particularly at the following information ...

Click on: www.scbar.org

Click on: **Home/South Carolina Bar**

Click on: **For the Public**

Click on: **Get Legal Help**

Click on: **Free Forms and Publications**

Click on: **Resources for Seniors**

Taxes at Death
Why You Need a Will
S. C. Senior Citizens Handbook
Advance Care Planning: Talking About Your
Health Care Choices

Click on: **Advance Directive Forms**

Transitions: Legal Issues for Parents and Caregivers
of Special Needs Children Transitioning to Adult-
hood

Appendix 4: Answers to Two Common Death-Related Questions.

Question 1: On the Propriety of Praying for Death to Come

Is it proper for the Christian to pray for death to come?

Quite often, especially if we are suffering physically and/or intellectually from the indignities of being bedridden and unable to care for ourselves and our private needs, the Christian will pray for God to end it all for us and to take us home to be with Him.

This can be a proper prayer; but it can also be a selfish and improper prayer.

Let us look at Paul's thoughts on the matter ...

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.” (Philippians 1:21-24)

There is nothing wrong or sinful in “*desiring to depart and be with Christ*” and asking God to take us home – if we ask in a proper manner, which can be discerned by three simple questions:

Are we willing to ask after the example of our Lord, “*nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.*” (Matthew 26:39)?

Are we really motivated by a “*desire to depart and be with Christ*”? Or, do we really just want to end to all our troubles and suffering.

Can we truthfully say that if God still has holy work for us to do, serving and glorifying Him and witnessing to others through our pain and suffering, that we actually want Him to let us remain? Can we willingly stay and suffer and wait patiently, trusting solely on His perfect timing, if He wants us to”?

If we can answer “Yes” to all these questions, then it is most proper for us to ask God to take us home.

Question 2: “Can, or Should, a Christian Cry at Funerals?”

We are sometimes asked ...

“If God is sovereign over the manner and time of our death and if, as we have said, death should be embraced with joyful anticipation as the gateway to being with our Lord ... ‘Can or should the Christian cry at funerals?’”

Well, what does the Bible tell us?

1. One thing that the Bible tells us that there is ... *“A time to weep”* (Ecclesiastes 3:4).

So, is the death of a loved one or close friend or neighbor one of those *“times”*?

2. The Bible also tells us that we, as Christians, are to ...

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:15)

Does that include bereavement at the loss of a spouse or close friend?

3. Most important of all, the Bible tells us that *“Jesus wept”* at the funeral of Lazarus ...

“Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’

Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’

They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’

Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how He loved him!’” (John 11:32-35)

There has been much discussion and speculation as to why our Lord *“groaned in the spirit and was troubled”* and why He *“wept”* at the funeral of His friend Lazarus.

We know that our Lord Jesus can have no unsuitable or sinful emotions. So, what can we say about His *“weeping”* at the funeral of his friend Lazarus.

I think John Calvin has the best explanation on the matter and will quote from his "Commentaries" on this passage ...

"... but when of His own accord, he conforms to those mourners, so far as to weep along with them, he gives proof that he has sympathy ... For the cause of this feeling is, in my opinion, expressed by the Evangelist, when he says that *Christ saw Mary and the rest weeping*. Yet I have no doubt that Christ contemplated something higher, namely, the general misery of the whole human race ... Accordingly, when he is about to raise Lazarus, before granting deliverance or aid, by *the groaning of his spirit*, by a strong feeling of grief, and by *tears*, he shows that he is a much affected by our distresses as if he had endured them in his own person.

But this simplicity will, in my opinion, be more agreeable to Scripture, if we say that the Son of God, having clothed himself with our flesh, of his own accord clothed himself also with human feelings, so that he did not differ at all from his brethren, sin only excepted. In this way we detract nothing from the glory of Christ, when we say that it was a voluntary submission, by which he was brought to resemble us in the feelings of the soul.

It will, perhaps be objected, that the passions of men are sinful, and therefore it cannot be admitted that we have them in common with the Son of God. I reply there is a wide difference between Christ and us. For the reason why our feelings are sinful is, that they rush on without restraint, and suffer no limit; but in Christ the feelings were adjusted and regulated in obedience to God, and were altogether free from sin.

Now Christ took upon him human affections, but without disorder; for he who obeys the passions of the flesh is not obedient to God. Christ was indeed troubled and vehemently agitated; but, at the same time, he kept himself in submission to the will of the Father.

Thus Paul does not demand from us hardened stupidity, but enjoins us to observe moderation *in our mourning, that we may not abandon ourselves to grief, like unbelievers who have no hope*, (I Thessalonians 4:13) for even Christ took our affections into himself, that by his power we may subdue everything in them that is sinful." (*From Calvin's Commentaries, Volume XVII, John 11:33-35*)

Because of the example of our Lord, we see that crying at funerals is not an attack upon God's sovereign dispositions and can be holy and proper if kept within proper bounds.

Again, we are told by Scripture itself to

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:15)

Soli Deo Gloria

“Glory to God Alone”