

A Good Farewell

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.
(2 Timothy 4:7-8)

Word of one's impending death is never easy to take. It comes either as a complete surprise or it confirms a suspicion of serious problems. What happens next is very important.

The way people face death is often a sad reflection of that which is valued in life. We all know how alluring life is. With all of its tangible blessings, it is hard to think of living without a beautiful family, wonderful house, good friends, gorgeous scenery, and so on. After all, those are likely the most enjoyed aspects of life. The thought of losing them greatly overshadows any lingering memories of hard times, heartaches, pain, and suffering. It seems a sad component of our human nature to immediately measure what we lose.

Those thoughts of loss not only antagonize the dying process, they can prove to be more devastating on those who will mourn their loved one's loss. It is sad enough that the survivors must be prepared to say "goodbye"; however, when the one dying seems to be consumed in sorrow and depression over his or her impending death, it leaves everyone devastated. What can they say? What can they do?

When the Apostle Paul faced his impending death he was gracious and optimistic. He saw life not as a sprint of personal gain but as a race for the Lord. He talked about learning to be content in all things (Philippians 4:12). He acknowledged the suffering in this world but felt it was a glorious suffering for the Lord (Philippians 3:10-11). He spoke with his greatest optimism for what came after death – the crown of righteousness.

A prognosis of death is a test for all who receive it. Yet, why is it a surprise? Is not death the expected conclusion of all life on earth? Is anyone entitled to be exempted from this universal consequence for sin? Of course not!

The way a person faces life reflects not only the values held in life but also leaves a legacy and example to the survivors about the *true* values in life. Life is more than the accumulation of things, the love of family, and the companionship of friends. Life is above everything else the earthly chapter of our existence devoted to serving God. Its measure of worthiness is found first in the relationship we have with God. Death, therefore, is the announcement that a person's service on earth is over and that they are going to join their Creator in heaven.

Consider not only your own preparation of death but the manner in which you face your death in order to prepare those around you. Until the actual moment, death really isn't all about you – it never was. It is about those around you learning and growing from what you can teach them. Teach them well.

For additional information and resources in dealing with this life topic, visit the Christian Life Resources website at www.ChristianLifeResources.com or call us at 1-800-729-9535.