

The Challenge of Dying

Series: I Thessalonians: A Message For Our Times

Rod Myers

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In my opinion we do not talk about death enough, and when we do it is usually when someone dies, which in my opinion is one of the worst times to talk about dying. But, the problem is on any given day those who may hear my message may know someone who has just died. But, I am going to take a chance and talk about it today because Paul has a lot to say about it in 1 Thessalonians.

I actually want to reframe this discussion of death to include the two possible ways we may get off planet earth (unless you become an astronaut). So I searched the text of 1 Thessalonians and came up with six words to inform our thinking about dying.

- Basis
 - What is our thinking of dying based on?
 - 1 Thess.4:13-14 13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.
 - Everything we need to know about dying is found in Jesus' death and resurrection. DO NOT UNDER-APPRECIATE THIS POINT.
- Expectation
 - Just as the prisoner always counts the days to when he is likely to get out of jail, and increases in the excitement of it as the day draws closer, so should Christians grow in their expectation of departing this planet for a new home.
 - 1 Thess.4:15-18 15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.
 - This should exit from here is planned by God to be one of the most exciting experiences a person will ever have (Better than a kids first ride on a roller coaster or a skydivers first jump from 15,000 feet.)
 - Dead will rise first and then the living will follow

- Surprise
 - 1 Thess.5:1-3 1 Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.
 - The anticipation is killing me
 - Of thieves and pregnant women
 - Beautiful Day at GCS (Georgia Christian School)-one day in spring when the whole school got to play all day-but we didn't know when it would be until Miss Smith starting singing Oh What a Beautiful Morning....
- Not Surprised
 - Though we do not know exactly when, we know it is coming
 - 1 Thess.5:4-8 4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.
 - We should be the most prepared people on earth to leave this planet
- Appointment
 - Ever write down a doctor's appointment a year in advance? Even if you aren't thinking about it, it is on the books. Then one day you get a call that says you have an appointment tomorrow.
 - 1Thess.5:9-10 9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.
 - Heb.9:27, “Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...”
- Hope
 - 1 Thess.4:13 13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope; 5:8 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.
 - Christians are hoping to leave this place for a better one-but some may need to nurture that hope. We might need to tune it up to make it sing. Hope should SMILE when it thinks about what God has prepared for those who love Him.
 - I think we should have some HOPE Parties. Where we sit around and dream about heaven.