

Remnant Life Church
February 26, 2023
Living Without Fear of the End
Eccl 3:1-8

I have been struck recently by the escalating national reports of people dying

- I have not figured out yet if there is an increased effort to report them
- Or if the number or percentage is in fact climbing
- We certainly have had death put in front of us over the last 3 years more and more
 - Beginning in 2020 it was an intentional focus for good or bad, right or wrong
 - But we have also learned that this type of information can be used to manipulate people's feelings and actions as much as inform them

With news recently of loved ones passing that have a connection with RLC I feel that God has pressed on me a responsibility to talk this morning about how we view the end of our physical lives

- This in by no means an exhaustive or conclusive teaching
- Each person deals with the news and reality of death in their own way
- But Christians should see death very differently than those who do not know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior

Now, some of you may be starting to squirm a little bit right now as very few people are comfortable talking about death although much has been written and said about it -

- Robin Williams was quoted as saying, *Death is nature's way of saying your table is ready.*
- Anonymous - *Dying is like getting audited by the IRS – something that only happens to other people – until it happens to you. –*
- Billy Graham of course had much to say about death...
 - *Death is not a trip, but a destination.*
 - *Death is said in the Bible to be a coronation for the Christian.*
 - *The word departure literally means to pull up anchor and set sail. Everything that happens prior to death is a preparation for the final voyage. Death marks the beginning, not the end. It is our journey to God.*
 - *Someday you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! I shall be more alive than I am now. I will have just changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God.*

Prov 14:27 - *The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death.*

But we also understand that there are two kinds of death; the first is physical death and second is spiritual death

- One is momentary
- The other is permanent

READ – **Ecc1 3:1-8**

Solomon is credited with having written three books of the OT

- The Proverbs
- Song of Songs
- Ecclesiastes

They are written at three intervals of his life

- Song of Songs in his youth
- The Proverbs as a wiser, older man
- And Ecclesiastes in his last years

When the word death is used by man the focus of the meaning is different than what God says about it

- With man, who lives with a sin nature, death is about control, loss of freedom, and restrictions
- When described through the nature of God, it is an act of love, gentleness, and freedom

And within the sovereignty, or control of God, is the concept of time

- Time is not our own although we treat it as if it is
- Only God knows the time that we have been given for our lives to be lived
- God and God alone knows the moment of our birth and the moment of our death

But what you believe about death and eternity will determine how you live

What do we know of death?

- It is the cessation of life
 - This shell of our existence, the body, stops functioning

- And it is inevitable for each and every one of us
- And there are only 2 ways to view death
 - It is the end of not only our physical existence but our consciousness as well
 - Or it is a continuation into the next life
- Death is all around us every moment of our lives
 - We just choose not to think of it that way
 - And for good reason!
 - It is not healthy to be preoccupied with death!
 - It should come as no surprise then that this is the very way that satan attacks our minds – especially of our young people
 - Making death, the undead, and all of the garbage coming out of Hollywood interesting and even desirable
 - The slasher movie genre was at its height in the late 70's to mid 80's
 - And it was the beginning of a desensitization to death that has brought it to the point of little to no effect
 - The best-selling video games have always and continue to have death as an intricate part of the plot
 - It has trained our children to think death is just something that happens and then you press the reset button
 - And we shake our heads and wonder why we hear about shootings all the time

- But death is not something we should fixate on, especially as a Christian!
 - We serve a God of life not of death
 - Jesus said in **John 10:10**, *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*
 - The thief is satan and it is his desire to steal life from everything of God's creation

1. Death is Certain

- a. *And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."*
Gen 2:16-17
- b. And because Adam and Eve disobeyed God, physical death became a part of our reality
 - i. *By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.* **Gen 3:19**
- No one – regardless of who they are, what they have, what they think, or what they believe, can escape physical death
 - Solomon was the wisest and wealthiest man who ever lived, but he died
 - We read in Genesis that Methuselah lived to be 969 years old, but then he died
 - Alexander the Great conquered a large percentage of the then known world but all of his

military might could not save him from June of 323 BC when he died at the young age of 32

- Albert Einstein was a genius of modern time but, despite his staggering intellect, on April 18, 1955 in Plainsboro, NJ he died
- And so death is inevitable, life is uncertain, the challenges of life are universal and yet even if we feel as if we are standing in the middle of a graveyard we can find hope.

2. When death occurs, the body and the soul (or spirit) separate

- a. This is why we say goodbye to those who go on before us
- b. That which we were in the physical is no more but the spirit lives on and, for the believer, is what is now in God's presence
- c. Will we have consciousness in that spirit? – Absolutely
- d. Jesus talks often with His disciples about being with Him in heaven
 - i. Using terms that are about life in heaven
 - ii. **John 14:1-3** - *Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*

3. Then why is death so universally feared?

- a. Woody Allen – *I am not afraid of death; I just don't want to be there when it happens.*
 - b. First, death is a curse brought on by sin
 - i. **Romans 5:12** – *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned*
 - c. Second, death represents the end of things that matter the most to people
 - i. Achievement, accomplishment, advancement, accumulation, control
 - ii. It is about the loss of fellowship and relationships
 - iii. It goes against the very survival instinct God placed in each one of us to cherish life
4. BUT...death should carry no fear for the Christian
- a. We have talked about fear at RLC many times
 - i. There is the healthy fear that God placed in every one of us to help us preserve and protect our lives
 - ii. Then there is the spirit of fear which is not of God but of satan designed to make us doubt, hide, and pull away for the life that God has given us
 - b. The Bible tells us not to be afraid, or fear not over 225 times
 - c. What is it that keeps fear from occupying our lives?
 - i. Love – God's love
 - ii. **I John 4:18** - *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

- d. We are also promised to be with God in paradise
 - i. **Luke 23:43** – Jesus promised the thief on the cross

And so, when a life comes to an end what should be foremost in our minds?

- Gratitude – for the time that God gave to us to be with them
- Rejoicing – that a brother or sister has been promoted and is now looking on the face of Jesus without the physical restrictions of this body
- Comfort – all their earthly troubles are done
- Assurance – of being reunited with them

Again, God's time is set for each of us - don't waste a moment of it robbed by the trivial things that just don't matter

We celebrate through the tears when a loved one or friend who was a believer is now with Jesus

We must pray for the family of those who die without knowing Jesus that they may come to know Him – perhaps even through you and your life.

- Be grateful for one another
- Rejoice in the relationships that God has blessed you with
- Treasure the time that we have with those who mean the most
- Value one another because the time we have is very precious

- Be sure to tell them how much they mean to you often

I lived (survived?) through the disco era of music

- Like many, I believed that the Bee Gees and their music was about disco music (Saturday Night Fever soundtrack #2 top selling of all time)
- But Katerina showed me something different – their musical careers and influence has spanned over 6 decades

- Four brothers - all gone with Barry the final one remaining
- He has said many times that his greatest regret in life is that the last words he spoke to each brother before they died were not kind words
 - He must live with that
 - He wishes he had one more chance to tell them each that he loved them
 - Said at his brother Robin's memorial service
 - *Even right up to the end we found conflict with each other, which now means nothing. It just means nothing.*
 - He went on to say that the things that divide us are truly of no importance when placed next to the love and the importance of family and our relationships with those we love.

Do not ever miss the chance to tell the ones most important to you that you love them

And never miss the opportunities that God gives us every day to tell someone that Jesus loves them.

