

## Coming To Grips With Our Mortality

No. 290

### Introduction.

I. Recently I read about a famous author who laid dying of cancer in New York City in 1981. As he was nearing death, he called The Associated Press and made this statement, "Everybody has to die. But I have always believed an exception would be made in my case. Now what?" And then he hung up the phone.

### II. Perhaps that is the way most of us think of death.

A. We know everyone must die, but we have yet to come to grips with the realization of it in our own lives. Will we really die? If so, will it be sunny or cloudy? Will it be winter or spring or summer? How will we die? Will it be in an accident? Will it be cancer? Will we die in our sleep?

B. Some of us may be saying, "**I don't want to think about death. It is upsetting and depressing.**"

1. **I fully understand that**, but we need to think about it because one of these days it will be forced upon us.
2. **During the years I have served this congregation**, a number of people who used to sit here among us have passed away. I could name dozens of people who are no longer with us. These were all good people - faithful members of this church - who died. In the coming years it is certain that others of us will be added to this list. The time will come sooner or later when your name and my name will be added to the list.
3. **William Randolph Hearst , the newspaper tycoon**, opened the famous Hearst Castle to public tours. He had a single rule that was adhered to strictly. Any visitor who broke the rule was immediately expelled from the castle. The rule was simply that death could never be mentioned. Hearst had the means to silence others on the subject of mortality - at least while they were guests in his home - but he died anyway.
4. It is said that the only **two sure things in this life are death and taxes**. Denying the reality of the tax man can land you in jail. Denying the reality of death could land you in hell because if you don't think about it, you'll end up unprepared.
5. **So how can we come to grips with our own mortality?** Surely we know that we should handle the issue differently than the unbelievers around us, but how can we handle it?
6. I would like to discuss "Coming To Grips With Our Mortality." This discussion will be from the Christian point of view. There is little to help those who reject God and the Bible and Christ come to grips with their mortality.

I. **Divine Perspective** - We need a Divine perspective toward our mortality.

A. The human view of mortality is most often very disgusting and inferior and depressing.

1. Men most often think man has no real purpose in this world. Men most often think man is an accident and is some advanced amoeba whose only purpose is life is to merely exist or to satisfy fleshly desires. Many men reject God, and adopt this atheistic philosophy. (1 Cor. 15:32).

2. I looked at one atheistic website that sought to comfort its readers with these quotes that reject the Divine perspective.

**Every once in a while, I'll have a sleepless night, suddenly aware of how temporary I am, trying to accept the smallness of my place in this world, overwhelmed by the weirdness of being. Other days I'll be unable to fully focus on the tasks at hand, obsessing about how everything I'm looking at is impermanent, and that my viewpoint will be extinguished someday. Sometimes I'll start playing the numbers game: if I lived to be 80, I have just under 30,000 days, just over 4,000 weeks- and I've lived through a number of those already!-- Kirk Israel**

**"As they say in my country, the only thing that separates us from the animals are mindless superstition and pointless ritual." --Latka Gravas in "Taxi"**

**"Since God is silent, man is his own master; he must live in a disenchanted world, submit everything to criticism, and make his own way." --Peter Gay**

**"We are here for no purpose, unless we can invent one." --Kurt Vonnegut, Jailbird**

**"But I don't have to know an answer. I don't feel frightened by not knowing things, by being lost in the mysterious universe without having any purpose, which is the way it really is, as far as I can tell, possibly. It doesn't frighten me."--Richard Feynman**

**There ain't no answer.  
There ain't going to be any answer.  
There never has been an answer.  
There's the answer. --Gertrude Stein**

**"Life is a search for the truth; and there is no truth"--Chinese Proverb**

**"Today is the first day of the rest of your short, brutish existence as a sentient creature before being snuffed out into utter nothingness for all eternity." --Matt Groening**

B. In contrast to these disgusting , depressing and inferior views of mortality, the Christian has a Divine view.

### **The Christian Realizes**

1. Man is not an accident or a product of evolution, but God has made us. (Gen. 1:26).	3. God does not want us to merely exist, but He wants us to have the abundant life in His Son. (Jn.10:10).
2. Men have been placed on this earth to worship and glorify and obey God. (Eccles. 12:13; Matt. 5:14-16; 1 Cor. 10:31, 32).	4. We are not here to merely please ourselves, but to serve others and make life better for them. (1 Cor. 10:24).

II. **Realistic Perspective** - We are to have a realistic perspective toward our mortality.

- A. The realistic perspective means we recognize that in life can will have a lot of pain and suffering. (Job 14:1).
- B. Paul talked about this perspective in 2 Corinthians 5. (2 Cor. 5:1, 2).

**1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven;**

1. **Paul did not have his head in the sand.** He knew there are some harsh realities in life. He knew that pain and suffering are not our imagination. They really exist and can be quite severe.
2. **Paul here speaks of two houses.**

a. There is “a building from God, a house not made with hands.”	e. Some of this comes from the afflictions imposed on us by ourselves.
b. There is also a earthly house or tabernacle.	f. Some of this comes from the afflictions imposed on us by others.
c. He says “for indeed in this house [or body] we groan.”	g. Some of this comes from our bodies malfunctioning
d. “Groaning” is Paul way of referring to the pain and suffering and trouble we suffer in this mortal body.	h. Some of this comes from the aging process in which everything seems uphill and gets steeper and steeper with each passing year

3. In a piece called “**It’s Later Than You Think**” an unknown author quipped.

"Everything is farther than it used to be. It's twice as far from my house to the station now, and they've added a hill, which I've just noticed. The trains leave sooner, too, but I've given up running for them because they go faster than they used to. Seems to me they're making staircases steeper than in the old days. And have you noticed the small print they're using lately? Newspapers are getting farther and farther away when I hold them. I have to squint to make out the news. Now it's ridiculous to suggest that a person my age needs glasses, but it's the only way I can find out what's going on without someone reading aloud to me. And that isn't much help because everybody seems to speak in such a low voice I can scarcely hear them."

B. The realistic perspective means we recognize that **life can be short or long.**

1. The Bible teaches us during of our life on earth is uncertain. (Prov. 27:1; Jas. 4:14).
2. The Bible teaches us that we are pilgrims on this earth, and regardless of how healthy we eat, how careful we are, or how much we exercise we will still die. (Eccles. 3:2; Heb. 9:27).

III. **Eternal Perspective** - We need an eternal perspective toward our mortality.

- A. Paul said, “we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Cor. 5:1).
- B. Paul wants us to realize that our physical bodies are temporary, but one day we will be clothed with a new house or body, that is, eternal.

1. This new body will be perfect in every way	5. It will be like the glorious body of Jesus. (Phil. 3:20).
2. It will never wear out.	6. It will never grow old or decay
3. It will never have any defects or weaknesses.	7. It will never know pain. (Rev. 21:4)
4. It will be immortal and imperishable. (1 Cor. 15:53).	8. This body will also be eternal. (2 Cor. 5:1).

**C. I have in my hand a 25' tape measure.**

1. If the first inch represents the length of our earthly life, the whole tape would represent 300 such lives.
2. Wouldn't it be encouraging to know that, instead of the typical one inch (a 70 plus year life span) God was going to give us 300 inches? That would certainly inspire and motivate us!
3. **What if God offered us four times that much?** That would be great wouldn't it? That would be 1200 seventy-year life spans. What if I told you God was going to give us a thousand full tapes? What if I told you God was going to give us ten thousand full tapes? The truth is that God will give us ten thousand full tapes and ten thousand more and then an infinite number of tapes after that.
4. **This should excite us.** This should thrill us. This should motivate us to use our mortality in such way that we are preparing for the vast eternity to come. We should not fear the end of the half-inch or inch God has given us here and now. We know when the inch is over that God has yards and miles for us to live in eternity.

**Conclusion.**

I. We need the attitude Paul expressed in Philippians 1. (Phil. 1:21-25).

**21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. 25 And convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith,**

II. He also wrote these words to the brothers and sisters in Corinth. (2 Cor. 5:6-8).

**6 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight— 8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.**

III. We need to have the attitude of Paul.

A. We know our mortal and our physical bodies are temporary.	F. He wants us to live with the certainty that when this mortal life is over that heaven and all its glory awaits us.
B. We know we have work to do here on earth during our mortal existence.	G. He wants us to be happy and cheerful recognizing all our trouble and trials are momentary.
C. We know when our time comes, now or later, that we do not need to fear death	H. He wants us to know that nothing compares to the “far better” home and existence that awaits us.
D. We know “to die is gain”. (Phil. 1:21)	I. He wants us to fix our hearts and minds on the eternal
E. We know God does not want us to stress about “our inch” (our earthly existence).	J. He wants us to spend our mortality serving Him. (Eccles. 12:13).

**IV. May all of us come to grips with our mortality and spend our time preparing for the eternal life with God.**  
 May all who have not come to Christ do so now and then live for Him. We invite those outside of Christ to come to Jesus and be baptized by His authority for the forgiveness of sins. Come as we stand and sing.

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