

NOT AFRAID TO DIE

-A sermon outline with appropriate quotes, hymns,
and accompanying Scripture references
-by Greg Munger

Introduction:

With a population of about 320 million in the United States, records tell us that approximately 2.6 million people die from various causes each year. That is over 7,000 each day, 300 each hour, and 5 each minute.

But one vital statistic that is not often written down is what a person says or does or writes before his death. The reason this is important is that how well a man finishes tells you much about his character, the condition of his eternal soul, and what he thinks about God and life after death.

For example, some have little concern or even erroneous views of eternity and the state of their eternal soul. Mark Twain, morose and weary of life shortly before his death, wrote, "A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle;...squabble and scold and fight...scramble for little mean advantages over each other; then age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; ...those they love are taken from them, and the joy of life is turned to aching grief. The release comes at last--the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them--and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence,...a world which will lament them a day and forget them forever."

Others, like Sarah Winchester, widow of the wealthy rifle and gun magnate, suffering from severe depression, followed the advice of a spiritist to avoid death by buying and expanding an unfinished 17-room mansion to supposedly appease the ghosts of people killed by the Winchester rifle.. For the next 38 years she poured tens of millions of dollars into the seven-story mansion, ending with 150 rooms, 13 bathrooms, 2,000 doors, 47 fireplaces, and 10,000 windows. At her death, she left enough materials so that they could have continued building for another 80 years. Today that weird monstrosity of a house stands as a silent witness to the fear of death that holds millions of people in bondage (Heb. 2:15).

In stark contrast, we have the written death-bed testimonies of some of God's choicest servants of the past:

Martin Luther - "Our God is the God from whom cometh salvation: God is the Lord by whom we escape death."

John Calvin - "Thou, Lord, bruise me; but I am abundantly satisfied, since it is from Thy hand."

John Knox - "Live in Christ, and the flesh need not fear death."

John Wesley - "The best of all is, God is with us. Farewell! Farewell!"

Charles Wesley - "I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness--satisfied, satisfied!"

John Owen, the great Puritan - "I am yet in the land of the dying, but I hope soon to be in the land of the living."

Hudson Taylor (founder of China Inland Mission) - "I am so weak that I cannot read my Bible or even pray. I can only lie still in God's arms like a little child and trust."

Fanny Crosby (blind from infancy) - "When I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior! 'Someday the silver cord will break, and I no more as now shall sing; but oh, the joy when I shall wake within the palace of the King! And I shall see Him face to face, and tell the story--saved by grace!'"

How is it that this latter group of people could be so unafraid of death and rather embrace and welcome it? They had the assurance of God's blessing promised in his Word that is found in our text.

Revelation 14:12-13 - *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.*

1. A Cheering Comfort

a. Cheering

-Here is a blessing from God in the midst of a chapter and book of terrible judgments and woes, of punishments and eternal damnation; C.H. Spurgeon described it as a "a picture grim and black to mortal eye. No sounds of music, no consolations of friends, but quite the reverse; all is painful, terrible, and the very opposite of blessed, so far as strikes the eye and ear. Hence it became needful that there should be a voice from heaven to say, 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.'"

- "Blessed..." = the Greek word is plural, so that the rendering could be "Oh, the multiplied happinesses"

--One of Seven named blessings recorded in Rev.: -**Revelation 1:3** - *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.* **Revelation 14:13** - *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.* **Revelation 16:15** - *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.* **Revelation 19:9** - *Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God,* **Revelation 20:6** - *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.* **Revelation 22:7** - *Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.* **Revelation 22:14** - *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

b. Comfort

-the Bible has much to say to comfort believer's in Jesus when they face the last enemy death

1. Their death is Precious to God - Psalm 116:15 - *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*
2. They go immediately to be with the Lord - 2 Cor. 5:1-8
3. They are asleep in Jesus - 1 Thess 4:13-18
4. They will come with Christ when He returns - 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:13-18
5. They will receive a new glorified body - 1 Cor. 15:16-28, 35-57; i John 3:2 - *It doth not yet appear what we shall be...but we shall be like Him for we shall see him as He is.*

2. Confirmed Certainty - "voice from heaven, write...yea, saith the Spirit"

a. Decreed by God the Father

- "voice from heaven" = 7 times appears in Rev. (10:4, 8; 11:12; 14:2, 13; 16:17; 18:4);

-**2 Samuel 22:14** - *The Lord thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice.* (cf. Dan. 4:37; Joel 3:16);

-**Matthew 3:17** - *And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* (also John 12:28; 2 Peter 1:18); -God has determined eternal redemption

for all those in Christ: -Isa. 45:17 - *everlasting salvation*; 51:11 - *everlasting joy*; 54:8 - *everlasting kindness...mercy*; 55:3 - *everlasting covenant*; Jer. 31:3 - *everlasting love*; Dan. 12:2 - *And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*; [Romans 16:26](#) - *But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:*

b Accomplished by God the Son

- John 3:15-16, 36 - *believeth on the Son shall not perish, but hath everlasting life*; 4:14 - *But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*; 5:24 - *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*; [John 6:37-40](#); [Hebrews 1:3](#) - *by himself purged our sins*; [2:14-18](#) - *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* [9:11-12](#) - *But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.* [13:20](#) - *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,* [2 Peter 1:11](#) - *For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

c. Confirmed by God the Holy Spirit

- "yea" = strong, solemn & emphatic affirmation; verily, truly, most assuredly
- [Galatians 6:8](#) - *For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* Heb. 6:13-18 - *For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself,...That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

3. Critical Condition - "die in the Lord"

a. **The blessing is not upon all that die** (compare the many verses in Rev. that speak of eternal judgment on the unregenerate)

b. But only for those that die "in the Lord Jesus Christ"

C.H. Spurgeon - "To be blessed when we die we must be saints. By nature we are sinners, and by grace we must become saints if we would enter heaven; for it is the land of saints, and none but saints can ever pass its frontiers. Since death does not change character, we must be made saints here below if we are to be saints above."

- Scripture explains what this means: e.g. - [Romans 3:24](#) - *justified freely by his grace*

through the redemption that is **in Christ Jesus**; see esp. Eph. 1 & 2, and 2 Cor. 5:17-21; -Rev. 14:12 - *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.* Those "in Christ" are they who patiently endure the many trials of the Christian life, steadfastly seek to obey all that God has commanded in His word, and persevere in, by, and through the grace of God's Holy Spirit and their faith in their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Rise, my soul, behold 'tis Jesus

J. Denham Smith, 1817-1889

Rise, my Soul! behold 'tis Jesus,
Jesus fills Thy wond'ring eyes;
See Him now in glory seated,
Where thy sins no more can rise.

All Thy sins were laid upon Him,
Jesus bore them on the tree;
God, who knew them, laid them on Him,
And, believing, thou art free.

There in righteousness transcendent,
Lo! He doth in Heav'n appear,
Shows the blood of His atonement
As thy title to be there.

God now brings thee to His dwelling,
Spreads for thee His feast divine,
Bids thee welcome, ever telling
What a portion there is thine.

4. **Confident Consequences** - "that they may rest from their labors"

-***that they may*** = indicates a confident assertion, they SHALL rest

-***rest*** = a total & complete rest & refreshing after all the necessary work and toilsome labor is done; and since all the work is done, there is nothing left to do but rest and rest forever. (same word is used in Matt. 11:28 - *come unto me...I will give you rest*)

-***labors*** = intense labor united with trouble; deep fatigue, extreme weariness

-**Believers in Jesus can be confident that in eternity they will rest from...**

a. ***Suffering the many sicknesses, sorrows, faults and failings of this earthly life***

-**Revelation 21:4** - *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

b. ***Struggling against sin, self and Satan***

-James 4:1-10

c ***Striving for sanctification and holiness of life in obedience to God's Word and conformity to Jesus Christ***

-**1 Thess. 4:3-4** - *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in*

*sanctification and honour; [2 Thess. 2:13](#) - But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through **sanctification** of the Spirit and belief of the truth.*

d. **Standing for Christ, His church and His Word**

-Jude 1:3 - *earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*

e. **Serving the Lord and others**

-Gal. 5:13 - *by love serve one another*

“In that circle of God's favor
Circle of the Father's love,
All is rest and rest forever,
All is perfectness above.

Blessed, glorious word forever –
Yea, forever is the word;
Nothing can the ransomed sever,
Naught divide them from the Lord”

5. **Christian's Crown** - "their works do follow them"

a. **Their works do not proceed them to plead the merits of self-righteousness and procure admittance**

-Rom. 10:3-4 - *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* Heb. 6:19-20 - *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

b. **Their works do not accompany them to add anything to their faith in Christ**

-Gal. 2:16 - *a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

c. **Their works simply follow them as evidences of genuine saving faith and God's grace at work in their life, and as proof that they are Christ's indeed**

-[Eph. 2:10](#) - *For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus** unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk **in** them.* James 2:18 - *I will **shew** thee my faith by my **works**.*

-C.H. Spurgeon - "The idle Christian can have little hope of a reward; he who serves not his Master can scarcely expect that his Master will at the last gird himself and serve him. If I address any here who are not bringing forth fruit unto God, I can say no less than this, "Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." The rule is invariable. It must be so. If there be no works and no labours for Christ, no suffering or patient endurance, we lack the main evidence of being the people of God at all."

d. **Their good works will be blessings to future generations until Christ comes again**

-Matt. 5:16 - *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

1 Cor. 15:58 - *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

e. **Their works will be the basis of their eternal rewards**

-[Matthew 16:27](#) - *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall **reward** every man according to his works.*

-2 Tim. 4:7-8 - *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

-[Rev. 22:12](#) - *And, behold, I come quickly; and my **reward** is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

Conclusion:

C.H. Spurgeon - "A dying believer, who was attended by an apothecary who was also a child of God, was observed to be whispering to himself while dying, and his good attendant, wishing to know what were his last words, placed his ear against the dying man's lips, and heard him repeating to himself again and again the words, 'For ever with the Lord, For ever with the Lord.'...Are any of you afraid of dying? Oh! never be afraid of that; be afraid of living. Living is the only thing which can do any mischief; dying never can hurt a Christian. Do not be afraid to die, beloved, but rather look at death as an experience to be desired. I have not the slightest wish to escape it. If you dwell near to God, you will not be afraid of dying; you will rather dread to remain here than to be taken away...Since then the dark flood must inevitably roll between thee and all thou hast, then wed thine heart to the Lord Jesus Christ who will never leave thee; trust thyself with Him who will go with thee through the black and surging current of death's stream, and who will land thee safely on the celestial shore, and make thee sit with Him in heavenly places for ever."

Jesus lives, and so shall I

[Author: Christian F. Gellert \(1757\); Translator: John Dunmore Lang \(1826\)](#)

[Tune: JESUS, MEINE ZUVERSICHT \(Crüger\)](#)

1 Jesus lives, and so shall I.
Death! thy sting is gone forever!
He who deigned for me to die,
lives, the bands of death to sever.
He shall raise me from the dust:
Jesus is my hope and trust.

2 Jesus lives and reigns supreme;
and, his kingdom still remaining,
I shall also be with him,

ever living, ever reigning.
God has promised; be it must:
Jesus is my hope and trust.

3 Jesus lives, and by his grace,
vict'ry o'er my passions giving,
I will cleanse my heart and ways,
ever to his glory living.
Me he raises from the dust:
Jesus is my hope and trust.

4 Jesus lives! I know full well
naught from him my heart can sever,
life nor death nor pow'rs of hell,
joy nor grief, henceforth forever.
None of all his saints is lost:
Jesus is my hope and trust.

5 Jesus lives, and death is now
but my entrance into glory.
Courage, then, my soul, for thou
hast a crown of life before thee;
thou shalt find thy hopes were just:
Jesus is the Christian's trust.

Hymns to sing:

Rise, My Soul, Behold 'Tis Jesus (#51 in red hymnbook)
O Blessed God, How Kind Are all Thy Ways to Me (#72 in red book)
When this Passing World is Done (#474 in red book)
Jesus Lives, and So Shall I (#171 in red book)