



Why Should You think About Death

(Isaiah 51:6)

Death is not a natural part of life; it is the result of sin (Rom. 5:12). Death is dreadful and jarring and there is a sense in which we should never get used to the thought of it. None of us know death by experience, but the book of Job calls death the *"king of terrors"* (Job 18:14). Most people do not desire to think about death. However, according to the Bible, death is one of the most profitable subjects of reflection. In Isaiah 51:6, the Lord told His people,

"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail."

The point of this exhortation is that the certainty of death highlights the joys of the eternal salvation that God provides for His people. By considering the context of this passage and then the passage itself, I will seek to show you how the thought of death is profitable to your soul.

The purpose of this text is to comfort God's people. These people are described as those who listen to God's Word, who follow after righteousness, and who seek the Lord (v. 1. See 66:5). Christians are likewise those who have been born of God the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:9; 5:4, 18). Jesus said, *"He that is of God heareth God's words"* (John 8:47). To be a Christian is to trust God's promises (Rom. 4:21). In particular, we must trust that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, apart from whom no one comes to the Father (John 14:6). We are not saved by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His mercy (Titus 3:5). We believe in the name of the Lord Jesus so that we might be saved, and so that we might not be found in our own righteousness but the righteousness that God gives to us through faith in Him (Acts 16:31; Phil. 3:9). Nevertheless, those who are born of God love Christ and keep His commandments (John 14:15). Comfort in the face of death begins with trusting in Christ alone for your salvation and becoming His loving servants.

The means of the comfort provided is to consider the ways of God. God promised Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 22:18). This blessing came ultimately to the nations through the work of Christ on the cross and the offer of the gospel to all who will believe in Him (Gal. 3:16). Just as God called Abraham and Sarah when they were solitary and without children (Isa. 51:2) and yet made a great nation from them, God would likewise take His exiled people from a desolate wilderness and make them prosper joyfully as though they lived in the Garden of Eden (v. 3). God's law guides His people in a good path and He will judge His enemies while He saves them (v. 4-5). Comfort in the face of death rests upon God's faithfulness to His covenant promises and the fact that His arm is mighty to save in Christ.

Our comfort rests upon the permanence of God's salvation. This is set in contrast to the passing nature of life in this world. When you rise in the morning, look up and picture the sky vanishing away like smoke in the wind, and look down and imagine the earth itself wearing away like an old garment that is ready to be thrown away (Isa. 51:6). Then look at your own body and consider that, along with the vast ocean of humanity, you shall die. This is the one subject that few desire to think about. Yet this is the one thing that the Lord calls you to meditate upon in this text. Death is certain and it is part of the wrath and curse of God upon sin. Those who have not been born of the Holy Spirit, trusting in Christ alone, and calling God Father through Him are dead as they live (Eph. 5:14). You are born dead to spiritual things (Eph. 2:1ff), you will die physically (Heb. 9:27), and you will experience the everlasting and sensible death of God's wrath (Rev. 2:11; 21:8). This makes the

permanence of God's salvation and His righteousness stand out in glorious relief. God will no sooner violate His own righteous and immutable character than He will permit the salvation of His people to fail. Isaiah wrote earlier,

"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body they shall arise"

(Isa. 26:19)

God's promise of salvation in Christ is just as certain as the reality that we must all die. Comfort in the face of death is magnified by contrasting the brevity of life with the permanence of salvation in Christ.

Death will take you one of two directions. Either it will come to you as a friend to lift you into the arms of Christ, where you will experience fellowship with His righteousness eternally in your salvation; or death will throw you violently under the just wrath of the triune God in hell. Death is the gateway into both of these worlds and death admits permanent residents only into each place. One of the greatest wonders of the gospel is that Jesus Christ has incorporated the most unnatural part of life into the eternal life of His people. To live is Christ and to die is gain (Phil. 1:21). Because Christ has borne the curse of the law of God on our behalf, the sting of death is removed and the grave has no victory over us (1 Cor. 15:55). He who raised Christ from the dead will transform our lowly bodies into the likeness of His glorious body (Phil. 3:21) and the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from the dead will give life to our mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11).

So think upon your death often. Let these thoughts drive you to Christ the Lord as your Savior. While death is strange and unnatural, through His Person and work, Christ has made it profitable to His people.

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