

GNITN

#995

When Death Speaks, Hope Answers

Death Is Hard

As I was asking God what I should talk about in this podcast He simply told me “Go with your heart.” Sounds simple enough right? And maybe it was a tad vague, but it made sense in an instant. You see my mother died yesterday and it was a day of mixed emotions, of highs and lows, a time where doubts tried to creep in and my faith was tested. I’m not looking for sympathy here. So many others have lost loved ones in ways harder than I so that isn’t my purpose. Instead I just wanted to help someone, anyone who is struggling to try and figure out why they can’t share moments with them or trying to grasp the other why questions of it all. My father passed into eternity in 2017 as did my brother. It was a hard time as well for a variety of reasons. In particular losing my brother suddenly and without warning just made no sense. The processing of the facts of his passing didn’t seem to help any of us. He wasn’t struggling with a debilitating disease or condition. It just came out of nowhere. And he was only four years older than me. To many, including my parents, it wasn’t fair. I don’t begrudge their feelings at all. They won’t be the first to question the sudden loss of a child and certainly won’t be the last. It just highlights the raw emotions of life’s most intimate losses. And proves to us that death is indeed hard.

The Usual Words

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ([Rom 12:15, NIV](#))

I know I use them when I try to comfort and console people in my life whose loved one died. But it doesn’t need to be a relative. It could be a co-worker on a job. It could even be a mentor like a teacher, pastor or the like. We instinctively want to help and we do our level best to as they say “be there” for them. Phrases like we’re praying or thinking of you are common and trust me when I say they do help. I take people at their word and yesterday it did help. Knowing people in this digital age who took the time to send those words of comfort, well it got me through minutes and hours where I needed to forget the many thoughts swirling through my overactive brain and breath, just breath and take in the love being sent my way. You see each and every one of them also knew the loss of death in their lives and I believe they were embodying these verses in the Bible:

What a wonderful God we have—he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every mercy, and the one who so wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does he do this? So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us. ([2 Cor 1:4, TLB](#))

So I know there are some who, when people say things like they’re thinking of you or praying for you, blow them off as doing nothing tangible. I beg to disagree. And the Apostle Paul disagrees. I think I’m in good company on this sentiment. Even a little emoji or two make the point.

Taking It A Step Further

Generally even a person who doesn't share my faith in God understands the feelings of loss and even despair when death takes its toll on others. It is a universal emotion and harkens back to when Adam and Eve learned of the death of their son Abel. It stung I think just as hard if not harder than when they were expelled from the Garden of Eden for sinning. Both were significant losses, however to two people who had never seen the death of a child before and then to know it was their son Cain who took the life of Abel, well you can start to comprehend what was going through their hearts and minds. When Cain was told to go to another land these grieving parents must have felt they lost another son as well. Double the loss, double the pain. It is a tragic story on par with the classics of the great tragedies. But for my purposes it allows me to bring out another talking point and that I truly believe that as a Christian I have more comfort than that of shared loss. You see the Bible gives us hope when a loved one dies and this mortal life ends and they were a fellow Christian. Death to the believer isn't the end. I like how an [article](#) from [gotquestions.org](#) explains this very important difference:

In the loss of a Christian parent, the greatest comfort a believer has is the hope and confidence that our relationship with our parents does not end at death. A Christian who has lost a Christian parent can rest in the promise that there will be a reunion in heaven. Our parent is currently with Christ, experiencing His joy ([2 Corinthians 5:8](#)). At the time of the resurrection, all who have accepted Christ will be glorified and given incorruptible bodies ([1 Corinthians 15:42-44](#); [John 11:25](#)). For the Christian, Christ has conquered death! As Paul gladly writes in [1 Corinthians 15:54-57](#), "‘Death has been swallowed up in victory!’ ‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And this is the essence of resting in His promises when unrest and uncertainty wants to rule the day. In the last years of her life my mother's memory started to fail her. It was more than aggravating and disappointing. And now I can't ask her questions anymore. So there are many things I don't know about my mother. But there are important things I do know. She loved God, loved to read her Bible, and prayed for me in many of my uncertain times. And I find great comfort in knowing I will reunite with her in Heaven.

Inspiration Now

What do we do after the burial of a loved one? For some it is time to move on and get back to daily living. And for many it is a time to mourn a little longer, reminisce on the good memories and laugh at shared fun moments. A smile when looking at a picture always will help. But going back to the theme of seeing them again after we too shed this mortal coil brings us to yet one more important lesson that Christians can glean from the death of a loved one. And it is to run the race set before us in such a way that we honor their life of dedication to God. Were they perfect? No, but no one is. Did they make mistakes? Of course. Did they do their best to live for God? Most definitely. And now we need to do the same because we want to be remembered by the people in our life who are also looking at us. I'm reminded of another verse that puts this theme of honor in this life:

If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ([Rom 14:8, NLT](#))

And I think of another verse that inspires me to run a good race:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ([Heb 12:1, NLT](#))

This verse is not the start of new point by the writer of *Hebrews* since the original manuscript was written without chapters and verses. And in the previous text leading up to these words the faithful lives of heroes of the faith are recounted. I believe these are the great crowd of witnesses like those in the stands of an arena cheering on the athletes on the field, looking down cheering them on to victory. I don't think it's a stretch to see my mother coming to the stadium with her front row ticket to watch me run this race before me. And I can see and hear her rooting me on as she many times did in this life. But now she doesn't need a walker to get to her seat. Her body is healed and perfect. Her mind is clear as day. And I need to throw off the weights that slow me down and avoid the sin that can trip me up. She has her crown and she wants me to get mine as well. She lived a life that was different and it was a death that was different for me. Do I miss her? Most definitely. Will I see her again? You betcha!