

The Christian and Dying

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- I. Introduction
 - a. A lot of feedback from last week's lesson
 - b. Stories of recent events related to
 - i. Story of a couple who sued a hospital for wrongful birth and won over \$2 million b/c pre-natal genetic testing failed to diagnose their child's Down's Syndrome
 - 1. We love our child, but if we had known she would be disabled and require so much care, we would have terminated the pregnancy
 - ii. A woman who is disabled and on pain medication, want her doctor to prescribe poison to kill her
 - 1. Doesn't want to be burden to her family
 - iii. Ethicists promoting post-natal abortions
 - 1. In other words, killing unwanted babies after they are born
 - 2. Infanticide
 - c. Questions
 - i. What if a person is brain-dead and only machines are keeping their body alive?
 - ii. Is it appropriate to disconnect life support in these or similar cases
 - iii. Or to have a do not resuscitate order?
 - iv. We are not going to try to find answers to each individual situation
 - d. We are going to examine what God has revealed concerning the Christians relationship to life and death
- II. KEY THOUGHT: every Christian must attempt in death, as well as in life, to put the will of God ahead of personal concerns
- III. The Basics
 - a. Life is a gift from God – Acts 17:24-25
 - i. Suicide is wrong
 - ii. So is physician-assisted suicide
 - iii. Euthanasia is wrong
 - 1. Job – Pain and Suffering (Job 2:7-10)
 - 2. Abimelech – Pride (Judges 9:52-54)
 - 3. Saul – Fear (1 Samuel 31:3-4)
 - 4. Elijah – Sense of failure (1 Kings 19)
- IV. Jesus, Life & Death
 - a. Jesus did not only give us an example of how to live, he gave us an example of how to die
 - b. Used or refused extraordinary measures to prevent death, according to God's purposes:
 - i. Did use extraordinary life-saving measures (Luke 4:28-30)

- ii. Did not use extraordinary life-saving measures (Matthew 26:52-53)
 - c. Showed us that pain and suffering can have a purpose – Heb. 12:2; 1 Peter 3:18
 - d. Accepted or denied specific help based on God’s purposes – Mt. 27:33-35, John 19:28-29
 - i. **“ ‘Gall’ and ‘myrrh’ are words meaning in this case the same thing, a bitter infusion. This had the effect of stupefying the mind and nerves.”** – H. Leo Boles, “Commentary on Matthew” p. 538-539
 - ii. First refuses it,
 - iii. Later drinks it, at the end
 - e. Demonstrated that dying with dignity does not depend on favorable external circumstances - Luke 23:46-47
 - i. He had been mocked, flogged, cursed, spat upon, brutalized, stripped bare, insulted, and crucified.
 - ii. Was it possible for such a person to “die with dignity”? YES!!
- V. Paul, Life and Death
- a. Thorn in flesh – accepted suffering when it furthered God’s purposes (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
 - b. Made end of life decisions based on the purposes of God – (Philippians 1:20-25)
 - c. Used or did not use legal protection to avoid suffering/death based on God’s purposes
 - i. In Philippi – Acts 16
 - ii. In Jerusalem – Acts 22
- VI. Observations
- a. Four times we have seen a decision by Jesus or Paul go two ways:
 - i. Jesus: Use or not use extraordinary measures to save His life
 - ii. Jesus: Use or not use sour wine at the crucifixion
 - iii. Paul: Go to be with Christ, or stay and help the brethren
 - iv. Paul: Use or not use the law to avoid suffering or death
 - b. These decisions are not contradictory, they are being made based on competing principles.
 - i. Jesus did not want to cling to life for life’s sake, but he had to live long enough to accomplish God’s purposes
 - ii. Jesus did not take the sour wine until He knew all was finished
 - iii. Heaven is a great good, but helping others get there was a greater good
 - iv. The law could be used to avoid suffering, or to accomplish God’s purposes, which could be served best sometimes by suffering and sometimes by not suffering
 - c. When making end-of-life decisions, we must balance competing principles as well:
 - i. We must not cling to life, for life’s sake, but we must live long enough to accomplish God’s purposes

- ii. Like Jesus, some treatments may adversely affect our ability to finish the tasks that God has for us
 - iii. Like Paul, we must not let our desire for heaven rush us out of this life while we have a purpose here. Nor should we cling to life for fear of death.
 - iv. The amount of pain or suffering we might face should not override our primary concern: the will of God.
 - d. Not every Christian will make the same decisions, but every Christian must attempt in death, as well as in life, to put the will of God ahead of personal concerns.
- VII. Be Faithful unto Death
- a. Do not deny the faith - Revelation 2:10;
 - i. How important was it to the Christians who were tortured for their faith to have the example of Jesus at His death?
 - ii. Heb. 11:35 –
 - 1. not accepting deliverance
 - 2. Bill Arndt – Why didn't they just kill themselves to avoid the torture? It would be wrong
 - b. Show family, friends, and others how to face death - 1 Corinthians 15:54-58; Romans 8:35-37
 - i. Without fear
 - ii. Without bitterness
 - iii. With faith in God
 - iv. With trust in His mercy and care
 - c. Will we abandon our faith if we are afflicted with a debilitating condition? – 1 Corinthians 10:13
 - i. Both in Revelation 2:10 and in Hebrews 11, the righteous who are experiencing pain, suffering and death are described as being “tested” or “tempted”.
 - ii. God will make a way of escape.
 - iii. He will not allow us to suffer or be tempted more than we are able to handle
 - iv. KNOWING, as surely as you know God, that it will not get worse than a child can handle is a great comfort to the sufferer
- VIII. Bear one another's burdens
- a. When a Christian is facing the trials of suffering and death what should his brothers and sisters do? HELP, support and encourage
 - b. Offer them comfort - Matthew 25:31-40
 - i. In as much as you do it to the least of these my brethren you do it to me
 - ii. Personal service to Jesus Christ
 - iii. Is there anything better than that?
 - c. Sacrifice for them – Luke 10:30-37
 - i. Good Samaritan
 - ii. No limits to what we should do to help those in need, as we are able

- d. Take care of our own – 1 Timothy 5:8
 - i. Will we abandon our spouses if they become ill or disabled? Many have:
 - ii. - (Brother Young in Lakeland) Wife left, took up w/ another man. Brother told her, as far as I'm concerned we are still married, if you ever need me, let me know. After years passed she got terminally ill, her "second husband" abandoned her. She went back to her original husband and asked for help. He took her back and took care of her until she died. That's love!
 - iii. On the other side, two people just in my family, extended relatives, have been abandoned by their spouses when they were diagnosed with a terminal illness.
- e. Support our brethren – Galatians 6:2

IX. Conclusion

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." – Psalm 116:15

"For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." – Romans 14:7-8

"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" – Revelation 2:10