

## Even to Death

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Death marks the absolute end of our mortal existence. That's why we are so frightened of it. But what if it's *not* the end? How would we live our lives then?

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*“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”*  
(Rev. 2:10).

*“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death”*  
(Rev. 12:11).

*“For this is God, our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to death”* (Psa. 48:14).



Human beings are terrified of death. We spend most of our lives pretending that it won't touch us, that it is too far away to worry about. We go to great lengths to avoid it, and scramble to postpone it when it confronts us. Death is the ultimate End of Everything, and we would like to pretend it won't happen to us.

Some, on the other hand, view death through a different lens. When Paul addressed the subject of death in his sermons and letters, he often spoke of it as a state of *sleep*, a temporary condition from which we will eventually awaken (Ac. 13:36; 1 Cor. 15:6, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13-15). Faced with the prospect of his own approaching death, he described it as an opportunity to “depart and be with Christ which is far better” (Phil. 1:23). It was like finishing a race, an occasion for celebration, not mourning (2 Tim. 4:6-7).

This peculiar view of death is placed in even sharper focus when believers are threatened with death for their faith. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were ordered to bow down before Nebuchadnezzar's image—and thus compromise their loyalty to God—their response was immediate and unequivocal: “We do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (Dan. 3:18). These young men knew they were signing up for a gruesome death in a fiery furnace, but their devotion to God outweighed their fear of death. Martyrs throughout the ages have astounded onlookers by their willingness to embrace death rather than renounce their faith. Clearly, there is another mental paradigm operating in these stories.

To believers, death is not the end of life, but a transition to a higher plane of existence. The prospect of a better life hereafter alters how death is viewed. Death is not something to be feared, but a challenge to be experienced, a milestone on a much greater journey. Whether it comes from a lingering illness, a sudden accident, or at the hands of a tyrannical madman, death does not frighten the child of God as it does the one who has no hope. We *will* live again; death will *not* have the final word on our existence.

That's why the doctrine of the resurrection is such a cardinal component of our faith. Believers enjoy the days of this life in eager anticipation of the life that lies on the other side of the grave. Accept the promise of a future resurrection as a fact, and that conviction changes everything; deny it, and we're left to face the darkness of death helpless and alone.

Death comes to all. Why not accept that reality, and live every day as though it might be our last? And welcome the end when it comes? That radical mindset starts with a profound appreciation for the role of God in our lives. It is God who gives life, and God who takes it away. It is to God, therefore, that our whole life in between must be dedicated. We must be faithful to Him as best we can, and trust in the blood of the Lamb to cover the imperfections in our performance. It is when we make God “our guide even to death” that we are prepared to face death with calm assurance.

Christianity is not a death cult. Disciples of Jesus will not heedlessly cheat death nor hasten its arrival. But neither will they shrink away from its inevitable appointment.

— David King