



**“So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 34:5).**

## **Accepting Death**

**Central Truth:** God’s people can accept death with calm assurance.

**L222. Date:** May 1994. **Text:** Deuteronomy 34:1-8; Luke 9:28-31.

**Topic:** Death: Of Believers; Moses.

Physical death is one aspect of God's judgment upon sin. It was by the sin of Adam and Eve in Eden that physical death came into human experience. Every time you hear of a person dying, you know that God's judgment upon sin is still in effect. Death comes to young children who are innocent of personal sin because it has come upon the whole human race.

Sometimes death comes as a judgment upon a specific personal sin. Moses died in the land of Moab, without entering the Promised Land, because he had sinned against God at Meribah (Numbers 20:9-12). He died after viewing the land which he could not enter.

You must meet death, also. You must accept death on the occasion, in the manner, and under the circumstances that God prescribes. Rebellion at the prospect of your death, or the death of a loved one, is inappropriate for a child of God. You can and must give a Christian testimony in your death. Often that testimony is greater than any given in the strength of health and the joy of living. Decide well in advance that you will show how a Christian dies.

## **Accept Death for the Reason God Decrees**

**Death may come as a consequence of Adam's sin.** You remember the warning God gave to Adam: *“In the day you eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die.”* Adam had told Eve of that warning, adding the warning, *“Don't even touch it.”* (Read Genesis 25-17;

3:1-24.) They ate of that tree, in spite of God's warning. They died spiritually (separation of the spirit from God) and physically (separation of the spirit from the body). That same fate of death passed upon the whole human race as a consequence of their sin (Romans 5:12). When death comes to you or someone you love, remember that it is a part of our mortality.

**Death may come as a consequence of national sin** (Deuteronomy 1:21-39). Israel came to the border of Palestine. God directed her to begin the conquest of her promised possession. She hesitated. God instructed Moses to send twelve men, one from each tribe, to search out the land. They reported back that it was exactly as the Lord had described it, but that there were fortified cities and giant men living there. The hearts of the people became so discouraged that they gave up hope of a conquest. God announced that as a discipline for their sins, all the men of war who were twenty years and older at the time they left Egypt would die in the desert. The younger generation would grow up and enter the land. So an entire generation of adults died because of national sin.

**Death may come as a consequence of personal sin.** Moses finally ran out of patience because of repeated rebellions by the Israelites. When they came to him with complaints about water, he could bear it no longer. Instead of taking his anger to God and settling it there, he struck a rock to get water when God had instructed him to speak to it. The result was that God told Moses he would be forbidden to enter the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 34:1-8 recounts the death of Moses in the land of Moab as a consequence of his personal sin at Meribah (Numbers 20:1-13).

Those are the reasons that death comes today. Some die as a natural consequence of human frailty caused by Adam's sin. Others die because of national sin. Still others die because of personal sin. But all die. It is important that you have the attitude of heart to accept death for the reason God decrees for you.

### **Accept Death at the Time God Decrees**

Moses was 120 years old when he died. Even at that advanced age, having lived the last forty years under the very trying lifestyle of a nomad in the desert regions, his eyesight was not weak, neither was his physical strength lessened. And yet he died.

Death will come to you when your work for the Lord is ended. You may die while still possessing a healthy body that is capable of hard work. You may live in a body that is frail and unable to care for itself. But while you live, live to the Lord. When time comes to die, die to the Lord. Whether

you live or die, recognize that you are the Lord's (Romans 14:8). It was so with Moses, and he accepted death without complaint or fear.

Your death might come at the time when your dreams are not yet realized. Moses had dreamed for years of entering the land which God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had sought to begin the movement of his nation into that land eighty years before. He had begun, but failed (Exodus 2:11-15). Then forty years before, God had appeared to him in a burning bush and sent him back to Egypt to rescue his people from bondage. They had come out of Egypt with “a high hand” as a sign of their deliverance. For forty years Moses had led them through the desert to Canaan. Oh, how he would have liked to have stepped on that soil. But his dream was never realized. Death came first.

Do not resist God's time for you to die. Accept it with calm assurance that He who loves most knows best. Show how a Christian dies!

### **Accept Death in the Place God Decrees**

I have stood on Mount Nebo near the place where Moses stood that day. I have looked across the Jordan River valley to the west and have seen Jerusalem against the horizon. I have looked far to the southwest and have seen southern Palestine. I have looked to the northwest and could have seen the Sea of Galilee if it were not lying low behind the hills surrounding it. It is an inspiring view.

After Moses had spent forty years in the arid and semiarid regions, Canaan must have looked like a land of promise indeed. Somewhere in the area of Mount Nebo, Moses died, after having looked into the Land of Promise. He did not choose the place of his death; God did. And Moses did not rebel against God's choice.

You may not die in the place of your choice. You may prefer to die with family and dear friends gathered near. And that may or may not be. You may die at home or away. You may die in times of peace or in war. You may die with relatives or with strangers. You have no final choice in the matter. Wherever you die, God will be there. The psalmist wrote, “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me*” (Psalm 23:4). And He is, praise His name! It is enough that He is there, for at death you are going to Him.

God knows best. He knows the best reason, the best time, and the best place for you to die. Say to Him, “*My times are in thy hand*” (Psalm 31:15). He who does all things well will handle your death properly, also. Do not fear life, death, or what follows death.

## **Accept Death in the Manner That God Decrees**

We are not told the manner of Moses' death; only the time and the place are recorded. More than that would only stir our curiosity and be of no practical benefit to us. So God did not record it. Since it was just Moses and God, his death must have been a glorious experience.

One person dies quickly when struck with an illness. Another lingers long weeks, months, or even years before dying. One person dies in an automobile wreck, another in a windstorm, and another at the hands of a murderer. There are many ways in which we die.

Rest assured there are no "accidents" with God. No one dies before his time. No one lives beyond his time. He who numbers our very steps (Job 14:16) surely knows our days. Nothing cuts them short or extends them beyond His assignment.

If your days are prolonged in spite of illness and infirmity, know that God has spared you for a reason. Give yourself to a ministry of prayer (if you are too weak to do more), and continue to make a contribution to the kingdom of God as long as you can. Although there are accidents by which a person dies, there are no accidents by which one lives.

If death comes in the vitality of life, accept it as the act of Him whose wisdom is higher than the heavens above our wisdom. He does all things well.

I do not recommend a fatalism which says, "We are helpless pawns in the hands of a Supreme Power. We must submit to whatever is chosen for us." A thousand times NO! I recommend a childlike trust which says, "I have a loving Father who has a perfect plan for my life. I can trust Him to make all changes which involve me. I will not complain at my lot in life because He is in control." That is the difference that faith in God makes.

## **Accept Death As the Destiny God Decrees**

Death is not destruction for the Christian. It is a promotion, instead. Some have called the Christian's death a "graduation to glory." What a prospect! The apostle Paul wrote *"to die is gain. . . . To depart and to be with Christ . . . is far better"* (Philippians 1:21, 23). And it is, praise God!

Our believing dead have not perished. "Safe in the arms of Jesus, safe on His gentle breast,/There by His love o'er shaded,/Sweetly my soul shall rest" (Fanny J. Crosby). "What a blessed prospect! What others call death, we call deliverance. What they call the grave, we call glory. While they fear

annihilation, we rejoice in exaltation. That is the difference faith in Jesus makes when you come to the doorway of death.

I have a book in my personal library which is entitled, *Dying Testimonies of the Saved and Unsaved*. It records the last words of a Christian and those of a non-Christian. It is obvious in those dying words that the Christian dies in hope and the non-Christian dies without hope.

Moses did not die spiritually. He only laid aside a body in which he had lived for 120 years. But He continued to live. Luke 9:28-31 recounts how gloriously alive He was 1400 years after he died in Moab. Appearing with Elijah, he talked with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was recognized by Peter, James, and John, who were there with Jesus. He affirms that our believing dead are not perished; they are gloriously alive, waiting for us to step through the doorway we call death and join them in the presence of the Lord.

You are headed for physical death, unless the Lord returns soon. You must not rebel at the fact or the circumstances of your death. Resolve that you will give a Christian testimony in your death and at the death of your loved ones. Prepare physically and spiritually for that day. Faith in Jesus Christ is basic to Christian living and dying. God's people can accept death with calm assurance.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What is physical death?
2. What is spiritual death?
3. How does Adam's sin bring death to us?
4. How does personal sin sometimes bring death to us?
5. How might national sin bring death to us?
6. Why do different people die at different ages?
7. How can you be sure God is with you at death?
8. How does a Christian deal with the death of a loved one?
9. Why does death hold no danger to a Christian?
10. How do you know that there is life beyond death?