

1-3 Sounds of the Good Life.

If the Bible has no answer on death and dying, it has no answer on life. You see as we all know too well the terminal aspect of life is dying and death. If the Bible has no answer on life, the good life, and eternal life, it has no real answers. Life is pre-defined as simply living: beginning at birth and terminal during the dying process and death; the "good life" is defined as...well, that is the purpose of this chapter: that is to define the "good life". Eternal life is defined as living forever in a good state or in a bad state; for even as the Bible teaches it is assumed that while the body dies, the soul and spirit live on.

It just must be true that the Bible as the Word of God (that is, words from God on life and living) must define what it is to live the good life and die the good death. It must be true that if the Bible is the sole criterion for faith and practice (and it is), that it has a good definition of how to live and die. If it is true that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God" (and it is true) "and that it is profitable" for life, living, dying, and "instruction in righteousness" in order "that the man of God" woman, or child or God "may be complete" in all aspects of living and dying, then it must have instruction on dying.

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I must confess that for one day recently I had no answer for the friend who recently lost a wife, who the next day would be a pall bearer at the funeral of a fellow teacher who spend about two years in a comma without dying, and who he himself at age 83 faced the prospect of death. No, the prospect of death is not nearly as fearful as the prospect of a long, painful, or "out-of- it-condition" dying process. A survey showed that among adults next to the fear of speaking in public was the fear of a prolonged dying process. However after that one day of stumbling, I turned in simple faith back to the Bible that I have come to love and learn so well, and turned back to the prompting of the Holy Spirit after seeking answers in prayer; and the answer of HOW TO HAVE A GOOD DEATH was right there in the Bible along as part of how to have a "good life". Makes sense, doesn't it, that having a good death which includes the dying process is as much a part of having a good life as marriage or any other event of life.

Well, you read it for yourself, just as I reread it from I Peter 3:10-12. You will find it in quotation marks as it is a quote from the Old Testament, from the book of Psalms, from Psalms 34:12-16. You can get the same message on how to live and die the good life from either Testament. Let us start with I Peter in the total context of I Peter 3, and then go to Psalm in the total context of Psalm 34.

1. I Peter 3:10-12.

"For 'He who would love life and see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it: For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

Does this mean that the person who meets these biblical standards from the Apostle Peter is entitled to a better death than the evil? Without sounding like a fundamentalists or other "know-it-all", the answer would have to be "YES!" Not according to any of our wisdom, but according to the wisdom of God as given in the Bible.

(1). This "He" person is identified as: (a) He who would love life; and (b) He who would see good days. Here we must quickly distinguish between the "love of life" and the "love of the world". The Apostle John specifically

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admonishes us to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. All that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father, but is of the world. The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

Suddenly we are into "eternal life": the will of God is for us to stay away from "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"; and if we do so the majority of the time, we can live forever. However, the main point right now is the "good life".

What would be the sound of "the good life": the happy sound of children playing, the sound of pleasures with beer and friends. Really the sound of the good life as used by Peter and written in the Bible would have to include the ups and downs of life, the joys and the sorrows, the births and the deaths. And the prime point is that it would have to include a good death **{or dying process}** as well as a good life, since death is part of life.

Okay, what we come to next in I Peter 3:10-12 is **HOW TO ENSURE YOURSELF ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, A GOOD DYING PROCESS--**

(2). Refrain (or keep) your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Both of these aspects sound the same. To understand the fine points of the differences, we must turn to what Pastor James wrote on the "tongue" in the book of James. **{Remember that James was also an Apostle and the half-brother of Jesus as well as being the pastor of the first church every.}** And it is not possible to repeat the whole argument here of James 3, a chapter generally referred to by the subject "the untamable tongue". We can only briefly paraphrase: first of all think carefully before you become a teacher since a teacher **{one known for speaking many words}** is judged by God with more strict standards than others. We all stumble in many ways, and must face up to those stumbling; and the supreme challenge of Christ maturity is to not stumble in words, in the classroom or otherwise. The tongue is like a bit in a horse's mouth that can control the whole body; like the rudder of a ship used by the pilot to control during fierce winds; like a fire that can kindle a forest. The tongue can bless God and curse man made in the image of God.

Where does the fires of hell in the tongue come from? ...(James 3:14)

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...from "bitter envy and self-seeking". Therefore RULE #1 from Peter: in order to love life and see good days and a good death, avoid ENVY (the desire to have what you see that somebody else has) and SELF-SEEKING. I would never attempt to answer why so many that we admire have a bad death, but perhaps in the sin of "self-seeking" is the answer. You would have to agree that in our modern American context "self-seeking" has become acceptable as more "self-fulfillment".

(3). The second admonition from the Apostle Peter is to "turn away from evil and do good".

(4). The third admonition for a good life and death from the Apostle Peter is to "seek peace and pursue it."

We must keep these three admonitions for a good life in the context of I Peter 3: in other words what came before and after. What is before as a preface to a good life is the "Finally" of I Peter 3:8--all of you be of one mind

{that one mind should be the mind of Christ}, having compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted and be courteous; and then we have the words of wisdom on what it is to be called by Christ: do not return evil for evil, do not return reviling for reviling, rather in all those cases return blessings. If you do this you will inherit a blessing in life. **{Remember Jesus said "blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."}**

2. Psalm 34:10-12.

The words are almost the same in Psalm as in I Peter, but perhaps you would enjoy reading them devotionally, and several times over the years. What is somewhat different is the preface to the quote and the application!

(1). The preface to Psalm 34:10-12. Once again it is necessary to paraphrase: I sought the LORD God, the Father, the LORD God heard me

and "delivered me from all my fears". **{does this not remind you how God's ears are always open to the "righteous" and how His face is against the evil?}** The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear

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(respect) God properly in life and death. Those who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.

(2). The application to Psalm 34:10-12, Psalm 34:17-22: God hears when the righteous cry out in death or life; God delivers them out of all of their troubles; God is near, oh so very near, to those of a broken heart; God SAVES those of a contrite spirit; many afflictions will come the way of the good life and death, but God delivers the righteous out of all of them; God guards their bones **{and you must see that this speaks of death and life}**; and God REDEEMS the soul of His servants. **{You see that is eternal redemption, the salvation of the soul and the body for eternal life with God!}**

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