

David: Ending Well by— Fearing No Evil Psalm 23:4

Please open with me to Ecclesiastes 12.

When God describes what happens as we age, he calls it difficult times or even “evil” days. Old age can become a time when life is hardest, strength is least, and evil is most pressing—but that is not how it has to be! David shows us by his life that ending well by fearing no evil is possible through our Good Shepherd Jesus Christ.

Life is short, time flies, death is inescapable—but without Christ life becomes a wearying chase for something good enough to keep their mind's off thinking this all may be over soon.

In God's Word the Bible, two old men sat down and wrote their summary of life.
One was the father, the other his son.

Both wrote under the inspiration of God's Spirit.
Both had suffered through many afflictions.
Both knew the Lord in an unusual way.

For one life is looked back upon almost bitterly, speaking of the emptiness or vanity of life.

His name was Solomon.
His summary is a Book called Ecclesiastes.

The other looks back and sees a life long growth in experiencing God. His name was David, father of Solomon. His summary was still the song he wrote to his Good Shepherd called Psalm 23.

When life winds down, strength gets exhausted, and the end is in sight for you--which summary will fit your life?

- Will you look back on life like Solomon? Ending with bitterness, seeing all as vanity, and ending in emptiness?
- Or will you look back on life like David? Ending well by fearing no evil, in hopefulness, with life long growth in experiencing God?

The choice is completely yours this morning--you are each day writing the script that will be your life's summary!

The key is who you are following, where are you headed, and whether or not you have started down the right path.

God's desire is that you know Him; He wants you to start early and remember your Creator when you are young—and then never forget Him.

As a youth, David remembered His Creator. In fact I believe that's why a weary and exhausted Solomon—who had chased every pleasure the human mind could conceive, came to the conclusion that his dad was right.

Solomon, perhaps too late, realized that the only way to live and the best way to die--is to do so reflecting on the plans that God had for us in the first place.

Solomon found out after his restless pursuit of all the world had to offer--that nothing but God satisfies, and that life and death can be quite empty when God is left out.

Do you remember Solomon's inspired look at the pains, fears, and troubles of old age? Ecclesiastes 12 is a remarkable portrait of what we have to face someday. It is not a nice picture when life is empty and meaningless; but it is the best and most exciting time imaginable when life is full of God.

Please follow along with me in Ecclesiastes noting the regret filled wisdom of an empty life, as Solomon the wisest man who ever lived--remembers what he foolishly neglected.

Stand as we read Ecclesiastes 12:1-14 (NKJV)

*Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult **["evil" in KJV, NAS]** days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them": 2 While the sun and the light, The moon and the stars, Are not darkened, And the clouds do not return after the rain;*

*3 In the day when the keepers of the house tremble, **[probably legs]**
And the strong men bow down; **[probably shoulders]**
When the grinders cease because they are few, **[teeth]**
And those that look through the windows grow dim; **[eyes]***

*4 When the doors are shut in the streets, And the sound of grinding is low; **[probably hearing loss]***

*When one rises up at the sound of a bird, **[sleeping difficulties]**
And all the daughters of music are brought low; 5 Also they are afraid of height,
And of terrors in the way; **[growing fears]***

*When the almond tree blossoms, **[white hair]**
The grasshopper is a burden, **[weakness]***

*And desire fails. **[appetites gone]***

For man goes to his eternal home, And the mourners go about the streets.

[death]

6 Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, **[nerve problems]**
Or the golden bowl is broken, **[brain problems]**
Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, **[lung problems]**
Or the wheel broken at the well. **[heart problems]**

7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it. 8 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "All is vanity." 9 And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs. 10 The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth. 11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. 12 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

PRAY

When life winds down, strength gets exhausted, and the end is in sight for you--which summary will fit your life?

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- Or will you look back on life like David? Ending well by fearing no evil, in hopefulness, with life long growth in experiencing God?

David ended well and feared no evil because he remembered his Creator.

He sang to Him from many quiet and remote hillsides as he sat under the glistening stars. One of David's songs is perhaps the most well known song in the world. We call it the 23rd Song or Psalm. But it may really have been David's 1st song. It is certainly his most beloved song.

FEARING NO EVIL

Though he was but a youth the content of Psalm 23 is so profound. David pictures life as a long walk behind a Good Shepherd heading to spend the night with the shepherd, in His house, safe and secure.

Life is walking *behind the Shepherd*, the end of life is secured *by the Shepherd*, and eternity is spent *with the Shepherd*.

Now turn again to the fourth verse of Psalm 23 and see the truth lived out by David as

he breathes his last.

Psalm 23:4

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

David had remembered His Creator in the days of his youth—and he reaped a harvest of promised blessing.

For any young person listening today, David is a model of how to please God when young. He is also a great example of the benefits of right choices as a youth. But whether young or not, the truth remains that David ended well fearing no evil. And Psalm 23:5-6 explains how David was so secure, so serene and so blessed.

Death to David was not an unknown, it was not a mystery—it was an appointment. As we look at David's final recorded moments is that ***David sees death as an appointment with his Good Shepherd, who we know is Jesus.***

Even the greatest enemy—death, was disarmed before David. He could dine (a wonderful picture of his fellowship with the Lord) even in the presence of death, the end of all we know of this earthly part of life.

Psalm 23:5-6

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord
Forever.*

David had reservations in Heaven.

Heaven was where his God lived; Heaven was a place God prepared for him and he was following his guide through life into the valley, through the shadows and safely home,

Many times over the years I have stood at bedsides in hospitals, emergency rooms, and hospice arranged homes—and shared these same words.

Death is an appointment for all who know Jesus, with their Good Shepherd.

Jesus comes to take us through the valley of death's shadow.

We have an appointment already set by Him (Hebrews 9:27) and neither we nor He shall ever be early or late.

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the

judgment

When a loved one dies whether we make it there in time or not—the Good Shepherd always makes it. He arrives exactly on time and takes His beloved by the hand and walks them safely home.

THE FEAR OF DEATH IS DESTROYED

Fearing death, as we saw last time in Hebrews 2, was something we were born with; as Paul reminds us in Romans 7—it is part of our flesh that we all struggle with through every day of life.

But the more we focus on the character and promises of God—the more peaceful the ride to the end of life becomes. From our early American history comes this touching letter in the **Autobiography of John Todd**.

In October 1800 John Todd was born in Rutland, Vermont. Soon afterward his parents moved to Killingworth, Connecticut. When John was six years old, both his parents died. A kind-hearted aunt in North Killingworth agreed to take John and give him a home. He was brought up by her and lived in her home until he left to study for the ministry.

In middle life his aunt became seriously ill and feared she would die. In great distress she wrote John Todd a pitiful letter in which she asked what death would be like. Would it mean the end of everything, or is there beyond death a chance to continue living, loving and growing? Here is the letter John Todd sent his aunt in reply:

It is now thirty-five years since I as a little boy of six was left quite alone in the world. You sent me word that you would give me a home and be a kind mother to me. I will never forget the day when I made the long journey of ten miles to your house in North Killingworth. I can still remember my disappointment when instead of coming for me yourself, you sent Caesar to fetch me.

I well remember my tears and anxiety as perched high on your horse and clinging tight to Caesar I rode off to my new home. Night fell before we finished the journey, and as it grew dark, I became lonely and afraid. "Do you think she'll go to bed before we get there?" I asked Caesar anxiously. "Oh, no," he said reassuringly. "She'll stay up for you. When we get out of this here woods, you'll see her candle shinin' in the window."

Presently we did ride out into the clearing, and there, sure enough, was your candle. I remember you were waiting at the door, that you put your arms close about me and that you lifted me--a tired and bewildered little boy--down from the horse. You had a fire burning on the hearth, a hot supper waiting on the stove. After supper you took me to my room, heard me say my prayers, and then sat beside me till I fell asleep.

You probably realize why I am recalling all of this to your memory. Someday soon God will send for you to take you to a new home. Don't fear the summons, the strange journey or the dark messenger of death.

God can be trusted to do as much for you as you were kind enough to do for me so many years ago. At the end of the road you will find love and a welcome awaiting and you will be safe in God's care. I shall watch you and pray for you till you are out of sight and then wait for the day when I shall make the journey myself and find my Savior and you waiting at the end of the road to greet me¹.

This evening we are going to look at Psalm 116, but for just a moment let me remind you of one verse in that special Psalm.

"Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15, Emphasis added).

HOW TO END WELL BY FEARING NO EVIL? THINK OF THE WONDER OF ENTERING HEAVEN

When your appointment with death arrives, the Lord Jesus Himself will wondrously take you by the hand and usher you instantly into heaven. At the moment you are absent from the body you will forever be in His presence! Jesus Christ, who has guided you through the valley of the shadow of death, will continue to guide you as He takes you by the hand and leads you up past the marshaled ranks of the angels!

Do you remember how you will be clothed? In a white robe! If you will recall, when Jesus was transfigured, He pulled back the veil of His flesh to let us see what He's really like as God in His eternal divine state. Scripture tells us that His clothing began to glow so white that it was whiter than anything ever seen on earth. His face also began to shine. In fact, when John saw Him He was shining like the sun! And you, too, will have a glowing white robe because you will no longer be terrestrial, but celestial!

Psalm 104:2 tells us that Jesus is clothed *"with light as with a garment."* Because you will see Him as He is, you will look like Jesus—as white and bright as the day, and pure as light. What a reward it will be to have that robe draped around your shoulders and be invited to walk the shining paths of glory!

The Scriptures talk about what God's throne looks like. It is raised up, and sits in the sides of the north; in front of it is a glassy sea; surrounding it in concentric circles are the angels. When Daniel saw them, he said there were myriads of myriads—ten thousands of ten thousands. What does "ten thousand times ten thousand" equal? Hundreds of millions of standing angelic beings! How powerful are angels? Just one angel slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night! They are very powerful—and hundreds of millions of these super powerful angelic creations stand by God's throne.

¹ -From the autobiography of John Todd.

So then, you will walk by the marshaled hosts, the ranks of the angels, up through the golden boulevards of glory, up towards the cherubim.

When you get closer to God's throne, you will see creatures with four faces and six wings surrounding His throne. Hovering, they constantly say, "*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord.*" The seraphim, which means "*burning ones,*" join them. So these burning, holy creatures are speaking about God.

Finally, Christ will lead us up to the Throne; it is the nail scarred Hand of Jesus holding our hand; it is the nail scarred feet of Jesus walking us to at last face-to-face meet and see God the Father.

It is at that moment Jesus will confess our name before His Father and the angels (Revelation 3:5). He will introduce us saying,

"Father, I would like You to meet one for whom I died—one whom I bring to You as My beloved, as one whom I purchased. I now present to You, My child ..."

Then you will hear Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, actually say *your* name! Talk about the most unbelievable moment of your existence! Seeing Heaven and all its splendor is amazing; hearing the millions of voices, thunders and chants of the angels is awesome--but the greatest and richest part will be to hear Jesus Christ confess that you are His good and faithful servant!

What a wondrous entrance into heaven we each have to look forward to and fix our hopes upon!

MAKE A CHOICE TO END WELL BY FEARING NO EVIL

G. Campbell Morgan, a great Bible teacher in Britain a hundred years or so ago, wrote of this moment also, and he said:

"You are to remember with the passion burning within you that you are not the child of today. You are not of the Earth, you are more than dust; you are the child of tomorrow, you are of the eternities, you are the offspring of Deity.

"The measurement of your lives cannot be circumscribed by the point where blue sky kisses green earth. All the facts of your life cannot be encompassed in the one small sphere upon which you live. You belong to the infinite.

If you only make your fortune on the Earth—poor, sorry, silly soul—you have made a fortune, and stored it in a place where you cannot hold it. Make your fortune, but store it where it will greet you in the dawning of the new morning."²

² G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (New York: Revell, 1929), pp. 64-65.

Since Jesus is going to usher us into heaven and take us to meet our Father sitting on the throne, we should also think about what we want to send ahead. All that we do on earth is going to follow you to heaven! Some will burn and we will suffer loss, but some can last the fire and will be ours to give as our love gift to Him.

A few years back I once ordered a small computer memory upgrade over the Internet and received an e-mail asking me to track it. I had never done this sort of thing, so I hit the proper key and got this message: "Your package was put in a truck in Philadelphia and headed for the airport at 7:31." I thought: *Oh, that's great!*

I checked later in the day, and this time it said: "Your package has now arrived at the Philadelphia airport." I tracked that package's whereabouts each day until finally, as I checked it for the last time, the doorbell rang and the delivery man was actually dropping it at the door.

I then thought to myself, *We think nothing of tracking packages, but God says:*

*I have sealed you with My Spirit;
I have written My Name upon your heart;
I have addressed your soul with the very address of Heaven.*

When the time comes for you to go home—I am sending My Son to come and pick you up and bring you safely home.

Also, I'm tracking everything you've done on earth, and the part that is eternal is going to follow you—it's going to arrive with you in heaven."

The question for each of us this morning should be:

- Are you getting ready to meet Jesus?
- Do you know Him as your Good Shepherd?
- Are you trusting Him to deliver you from all evil? If so—you will end well!
- What are you sending ahead to heaven?
- When you come face to face with Jesus, what will you bring with you to offer the Lamb of God?

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My Jesus, I Love Thee [#364]

*My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.
I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me,
And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree;
I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.
I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death,
And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath;
And say, when the death dew lies cold on my brow;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.
—William R. Featherston, 1846-1873*