

TALKING POINT #27
LIFE'S TURNING POINTS #7: CHURCH AT LIFE'S FINAL TURNING POINT (PART I)

WESTERN SOCIETY'S LAST TABOO

Many subjects that were once not spoken about in “polite company” are now open for discussion. However, someone has said that the last taboo in Western society is death. If we're honest, most will admit that, while we may think about death, we don't talk about it. Because it is such a difficult and emotional subject, we just avoid it and keep our families away from it as a conversation topic.

However, this is too important an issue to gloss over and our reluctance to talk about it in the West seems strange to people from most other cultures. The consequence for us is that, when death occurs, we are often left without any tools to deal with our loss. The truth is that we will all have to face the sad reality of death – either the death of a loved one or our own – and so it is important that we let the Bible inform our understanding and be willing to discuss this issue in a sensitive way.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

The Bible makes it clear that we will all face death: “Just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgement, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Hebrews 9:27-28). So, in preparing for our own mortality, the most important thing to do is to ensure we are right with God through Jesus Christ and to call others to do the same.

But another important factor we see in how death is treated in the Bible is that it was part of community life. For example, when Lazarus dies in John 11, the whole community joins with his sisters to mourn. Death was not shoved into a dark private corner but was dealt with corporately.

We see in the cases of Jacob (Genesis 48-49) and King David (1 Kings 1), that each one sets their affairs in order before they die, to provide for the future. It is not showing a lack of faith to provide for our families in the case of our death. It is not through a lack of faith that Christians have wills.

The overwhelming chord the Bible strikes about death is that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, conquered death: “‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’ ‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:54-56) Death is not something we have to fear or be frightened to talk about because Jesus has already defeated death.

NOW FOR US AT FOREST LAKE

By being silent, many Churches toss away the opportunity to deal with this universal issue. Rather, it is something that must be dealt with sensitively and carefully but also in the confidence that Jesus gives. It is something that we can prepare for as individuals, as families and as a community by dealing with our own mortality, preparing where we can and comforting those who face death.

CONCLUSION

If this paper has raised concerns for you that you would like to discuss, please see one of the Pastors.

In our next instalment of *Life's Turning Points*, we'll look at Part II of our series on Life's Final Turning Point with 'The Church and Death'.