



INSIGHTS FOR DARK DAYS FROM ALISTAIR BEGG:

Preparing for Death

“Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ***‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’***”

JOHN 11:21–26

None of us knows what a day will bring. Indeed, we all live with a measure of uncertainty; we cannot be prepared for every trial that comes our way. Yet we also live in a fallen world, and we know the sting of sin is death. Dying, therefore, is one reality for which we *must* prepare.

Any consideration of death and dying that doesn’t pay careful attention to Jesus’ words is incomplete. A great place to start, then, is the solid instruction Jesus provided just after his friend Lazarus’s death.

“Even though our physical frames will fail us, when we believe Jesus is the resurrection and the life, death simply becomes a transition, a passing from one realm of life into another.”

Lazarus’s mourning sisters were deeply concerned about what had happened to their brother. In response, Jesus said that Lazarus was going to rise again. Martha, misunderstanding this declaration, said, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”¹ Jesus then took the conversation one step further, saying, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

Our answer to Jesus’ following question—“Do you believe this?”—affects both how we live and how we deal with death. Jesus has not only conquered death but also made a way for *us* to conquer death too. Even though our physical frames will fail us, when we believe Jesus is the resurrection and the life, death

simply becomes a transition, a passing from one realm of life into another.

One challenge which faces believers regarding death is not simply preparing ourselves for its imminence but also learning how to help others face it. No matter the situation, though, Jesus’ words provide the foundation for loving counsel. We are to speak both biblically and honestly, explaining the reality of eternity and the hope that is found in Him. Our words, echoing Christ’s own, should not be abrupt or unfeeling but filled with wisdom and grace.

We cannot know how to live until we’ve settled the question of how to die. Tomorrow is not promised. Let us not harden our hearts, then, but prepare ourselves, our friends, and our loved ones to overcome any fears and uncertainties about death with Christ’s promise of eternity.

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