

Fear Not; Only Believe

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[0 : 00] Well, as we prepare to hear the preaching of the Word, you can take out your Bibles and turn with me to Mark chapter 5. Mark chapter 5, and we'll begin reading at verse 21.

We did read some of this passage even last week, so some of this is a bit of review, and we will, in the midst of our reading of the Scriptures, summarize even a bit of the passage.

Mark 5, beginning in verse 21. This is the Word of the Lord. Put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.

So Jesus went with him. Then in verses 25 to 34, a woman who had suffered from years of bleeding discreetly touched the cloak of Jesus and was healed.

Jesus stopped, found her out, and spoke to her with great mercy. While Jesus was still speaking, verse 35 says, Some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler.

[1 : 23] Your daughter is dead, they said. Why bother the teacher anymore? Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, Don't be afraid. Just believe.

He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion with people crying and wailing loudly.

He went in and said to them, Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead, but asleep. But they laughed at him. After he had put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him and went in where the child was.

He took her by the hand and said to her, Talitha kum, which means, Little girl, I say to you, Get up. Immediately, the girl stood up and walked around.

She was 12 years old. At this, they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this and told them to give her something to eat.

[2 : 27] A person can endure a lot as long as they have hope. But there are situations in this fallen world where, left to ourselves, we are helpless and hopeless.

And the living God knows this. And so, in Mark's gospel, inspired by the Holy Spirit, we are being shown Jesus Christ is the hope of the hopeless.

And we've had four hopeless cases set before us then. Sinking disciples on the stormy sea.

Untameable madman possessed by a legion of demons.

An incurable woman with the disease for 12 years of bleeding. Spending all of her money on doctors and only growing worse. And now the fourth.

And this last one. This last hopeless situation far exceeds all the others. For what is more hopeless than a dead little girl?

[3 : 30] Now, she wasn't dead when her father came to Jesus. She was just sick and in the process of dying. But it was while Jesus was coming to her house that she did die.

And so, once again, we have our Lord Jesus set before us as the hope for the hopeless. And we'll see what this means for our own death. And the death of our own loved ones who died in Christ.

It's interesting that Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all of those writers, intertwined these last two hopeless cases. And it's not hard to understand why.

Because the two are intertwined, aren't they? The one affects the other. And beside that, we learn in a way of interest that the woman had the disease for 12 years and the little girl lived for 12 years. And so, in many ways, these two stories are found together. They're showing us two hopeless situations. I have four points this morning and then three lessons.

[4 : 34] I trust that we'll fix our eyes on Jesus, the hope of the hopeless. The first point is the desperate request of Jairus. Jesus is now on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

He's in the midst of a pressing crowd. And verse 22 tells us, Then one of the synagogue rulers named Jairus came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, My little daughter is dying.

Please come. Put your hand on her so that she will be healed and lived. And so Jesus went with him. Sweet words. You know, Jesus is no respecter of persons.

We see this by the ones he helps. The down and outers. The social outcasts. Like the man possessed by the demons. Like the woman with the defiling blood disease.

But here we also, Jesus has no prejudice against the privileged ruler of the synagogue. A highly respected and important man in the community.

[5 : 44] But at the end of the day, he's in the same boat as all the other hopeless people. Because none of his wealth and status can heal his dying little girl.

We find him just as desperate as the down and outers. Just as hopeless. Here he is on his face. Earnestly begging Jesus to come to his house and heal her.

You know, all people need this Savior. And he's willing to help all who call on him. So Jesus went with him. That's good news.

I wonder if you have come to this Savior for your desperate need of a Savior. To be separated from Christ is to be without hope. Without God in the world.

And if you should die in that state, it will mean an eternity without hope and without God. But if you come repenting and believing to him, he will hear you.

[6 : 47] He will save you. He turns none away. What a Savior. So Jesus went with him. And so they're on the way to Jairus' house.

And now we come to the second point. The interruption on the way. And we saw this last week, so we won't spend a lot of time. But we see here that Jairus' emergency is interrupted by this woman with a bleeding disease.

And lo and behold, Jesus takes time for this poor helpless woman. Poor Jairus. That must have tried his patience to the utmost to see Jesus delayed.

On his way to his house where his daughter was dying. Consider your own daughter. Sick and dying. Sinking fast. You call an ambulance.

It's on its way. But two blocks from your house, there's a terrible accident. And they stop to help someone there. That needs physical attention.

[7 : 48] Jairus must have died a thousand deaths to see Jesus being held up by this woman. Not moving on, even.

Until someone would come forward and confess, it was me that touched you. And then taking time to speak comforting words to her. We don't like interruptions, do we?

We don't like delays in our life. Especially when something or someone we love is at stake. They're great tests of faith. They're great revealers of the heart.

Jairus is in a hurry. But the Lord Jesus isn't. The account is given of the author of O Little Town of Bethlehem, Philip Brooks, a minister of the gospel a century or so ago in Philadelphia.

And one day his friend found him pacing in his office back and forth and asked him, Reverend Brooks, what is wrong? And he just said this, that I'm in a hurry and God isn't.

[8 : 56] That was Jairus. He's in a hurry to get Jesus to his house. Jesus is not in a hurry. He pauses to minister. And are we not like that?

We wanted this problem solved yesterday. But it just goes on and on. We wanted this trial removed, but it lingers and never ends. And we're being made to wait and wait.

I know you are, every one of you. We're all being made to wait for things, aren't we? That's the Christian life. We're waiting. But child of God, your God is worth waiting for.

And that's what Jairus saw in the end, wasn't it? His timing is perfect. And in due time, he will lift you up. 1 Peter 5, 6.

In due time, in his time, he will lift you up. This God who holds your life and all your ways in his hands, controls all that touches you, will not let anything through to touch you, but that he promises to bring about good through it.

[10 : 08] What a blessing to belong to this great God, a God who delights in our well-being. Yes, to even work in our interruptions and our delays and our waiting.

No one waits on him in vain. You see, he's got greater goals in mind than our own immediate ease and rest.

He's aiming at higher things like strengthening your faith, like developing patience and perseverance and hope, like teaching you to die to self-will and to sweetly submit to his will, to entrust everything to him, to make you more like Christ.

You see, he's aiming at higher things than our immediate rest, even at his greater glory. So why do we think that life ought to be about our ease rather than his greater glory?

You know, it was to Christ's greater glory to go to Jairus' home and raise a dead girl from the dead than it was to go to his house and raise a sick girl off of her sickbed.

[11 : 26] Greater glory, wouldn't you agree? Greater miracle to which he was to be greatly praised. We have a similar situation in John 11 with Lazarus, you remember. Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus.

The word comes, the one that you love is sick. That's their brother Lazarus. But when Jesus heard this, he said, this sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it.

Now, Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. And only then did he head back to Judea.

And the delay proved to be deadly, didn't it? For Lazarus goes from sick to dead. And now the case is hopeless. Lazarus, when Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been in the grave four days.

And so when Martha sees Jesus finally having come, she says to him, Lord, if you had been here, our brother would not have died. And then when Mary goes to see him, she says, Lord, if you had been here, our brother would not have died.

[12 : 38] It's like they must have been saying that to each other for four days. And now they each tell our Lord what they've been thinking about his delay. But just maybe it was intentional so that God's son may be glorified through it.

That's exactly the way it was. That's exactly what Jesus had said to his disciples as he waited two more days. And so it is in your life and mine. God is seeking greater glory to himself in all of our delays and waiting and interruptions.

So can we redefine interruption, delay, this way? According to scripture, an interruption is God's intentional design for the display of his greater glory and my greater good.

His intentional design, on purpose delaying that he might show his greater glory and to show his greater good to me.

Remember that the next time your schedule is interrupted and you're made to wait and tempted to complain. My God is pursuing his perfect plan to display something greater and better.

[13 : 56] So the painful interruption, it led to a hopeless situation. And that's now the next point, point three, beginning in verse 35, the hopeless situation.

Because while he was still speaking to this woman, some men came from the house of Jairus to the synagogue ruler. Your daughter is dead, they said.

Why bother the teacher anymore? Why bother the teacher?

Yes, it's hopeless. But we've had three other miracles along the way to prepare us to expect our Savior.

For he's able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or even imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. And so the Lord Jesus heard them come and say that she was dead.

[15 : 15] But verse 36 says, ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, don't be afraid, just believe. Fear not, only believe.

I don't know that any more has been said in four words. Fear not, only believe. That's worthy of a plaque on a wall somewhere, a note on your mirror, in the car to remind you.

Fear not, only believe. You know, that is fear not is the most repeated command in Scripture because in this fallen world, we often find ourselves facing the threat of losing something valuable to us.

Even our own life. And so this dangerous world where we're often afraid and fearful of loss, we need this word. Fear not, only believe.

But how do we do that? How do we fear not? I'm sure you've been in situations, you're lying in bed and you're fearing and worrying and all upset. And you would hear me say, fear not.

[16 : 24] Or you hear Christ say, fear not. But how? Well, fear is to be driven out by faith. We saw that on the stormy sea. Why are you so afraid? Do you have no faith? And so we see it again.

Fear is to be driven out by faith. Believing in the presence and power of Jesus. And even more than that, believing in the promise of Jesus. Because Luke 8:50 records Jesus as saying, Fear not, only believe, and she shall be healed.

There was a promise from Jesus to believe, to hold on to. You see, this fear not, only believe is not a blank check that we can receive anything we want if we only believe enough.

That's not what that wall plaque means. No, Jesus has said, fear not and only believe, and she will be healed. And that's what Jairus needed to hold on to.

The word of promise. But brothers and sisters, has God not given us many great and precious promises that do apply to our problems and trials that we can hang on to and only believe?

[17:38] That would drive our fears away. So Jesus is out to strengthen and to encourage the faith of Jairus right in the midst of his fears.

Right in the midst of the delay, the interruption. Right when he's feeling the most of fear. Man's hopelessness is Christ's opportunity.

Opportunity for him to exert his power and magnify his grace and glory. Is that the way you look at a hopeless situation in your life? This is an opportunity for Christ to show something of his grace and glory.

We have an omnipotent Lord who's mighty to save, who delights to work in things impossible to man. In fact, that's his forte. He specializes in those kinds of things, doesn't he?

The things where it's hopeless to man. So bring them to him. That's the application to us. And what seemed like an unfortunate interruption was actually meant to build the faith of this father.

[18:48] Because what did the father see by the delay? He saw another hopeless situation of that woman. And he saw what Jesus, the hope of the hopeless, did for her.

And that delay, you see, was partly to strengthen his faith. So that when he gets home and looks into the pale face of his dead daughter, he too will say, That lady trusted.

And God acted according to his word to her. He will do the same for me. So now, he's encouraged by Jesus' promise to only believe.

And he would see the Lord act on his behalf. So God's purpose in the delay was to prepare him for the trial of faith now before him. And that's why Jesus says to us in the midst of our trials and our waiting, Fear not.

Only believe. He's proven to be the hope of the hopeless. We've seen four cases of it. We ourselves are walking testaments to the reality that Jesus Christ is hope for the hopeless.

[19:58] We'll see that more and more as we proceed. Well, verse 35. He did not let anyone follow him.

So he's got the crowd pressing around him, and they're all following him. And at some point, he stopped and said, That's it. I don't know how he got them to stop, but he got them to stop. From there on, it was just Jairus and the three most intimate disciples, Peter, James, and John, that went with him.

He didn't want to overwhelm the grieving family by showing up with many guests. Besides, three of his closest disciples were witnesses enough to testify to this amazing miracle of raising the dead girl.

And they're the reason we're reading about it in our Bibles today. There were eyewitnesses there that day. It's highly thought that Peter passed on his eyewitness account to Mark, who records it for us.

So when they came to the home, verse 38, Jesus saw a commotion with people crying and wailing loudly. Because the synagogue ruler was an important man in the community, he had many people coming to the house to grieve the dead.

[21:14] Matthew refers to them as a crowd, a crowd of mourners. So yes, he leaves behind a crowd, but when he gets to the home, he finds another crowd of mourners. But also at death, professional mourners would be hired to weep and wail and beat their chest.

Matthew adds that there were flute players with the noisy crowd. Now grief is natural and is not sinful. Jesus wept.

Jesus grieved. And so in such times of loss, grief is proper. But this grief was excessive grief.

Unrestrained howling, loud moaning and groaning, weeping and wailing.

Only once in funerals that I've conducted over my lifetime of ministry have I ever heard wailing. At the casket. And it's enough to make your blood curdle if you haven't heard it.

It's the cry of desperation before the hopeless king of terrors, death. That's the kind of scene that Jesus comes upon in Jairus' house.

[22 : 32] And he went into them and he said, why all this commotion and wailing? Luke records, he says, get out. Matthew records, stop wailing.

The child is not dead but asleep. But they laughed at him. They laughed at him. Now some have argued from this word of Jesus, the child is not dead but asleep, that the girl really wasn't dead. She was only swooning and Jesus just revived her a bit. That's not the case. Her death is verified in many ways. First of all, the messengers that came clearly announced to Jairus, your daughter is dead.

Secondly, the flute players and mourners were already called to the house to mourn the dead.

Third, when Jesus said the child is not dead but asleep, they all laughed at him.

Dr. Luke records, they laughed at him knowing that she was dead. Her death by now was so obvious that to deny it was laughable.

[23 : 35] They laughed in his face. They jeered at him. They ridiculed him. You just arrived on the scene. What do you know? We've been here. She's dead. And they laughed him to scorn.

And then fourth, the word sleep for Jesus and the early Christians became a common term, description for death. And Jesus used the same language to refer to dead Lazarus in John 11.

He says to his disciples, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I'm going there to wake him up. His disciples replied, Lord, if he sleeps, he'll get better. However, Jesus had been speaking of his death when he said he's sleeping.

But his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So he then told them plainly, Lazarus is dead. You see, falling asleep often referred to death.

And it was the same here when Jesus says the child is not dead but asleep. It's a fitting term for her death since she was not dead to stay dead, as Robertson, the commentator, remarks.

[24 : 43] It's just like when you lie down at night to sleep, kids. You don't go there to lie down to stay lying down. No, you got up this morning. So just as you lie down to get up, Jesus is saying this death is not the final word.

This isn't the end. She's going to rise up, just as he said of Lazarus. And then fifth, the most significant proof that she was dead is found in Dr. Luke's account, chapter 8 and verse 55.

After Jesus raised her up, Dr. Luke says her spirit returned. And at once she stood up. Children, do you know that there are two parts to your one being?

There's your body and there's your spirit that indwells your body. You're two parts. And they're intertwined. And yet death, which is unnatural, is not the way God made things.

It was what the curse brought. Death is the separation of the body and the spirit. James 2.26 says the body without the spirit is dead. This little girl's spirit had left her body.

[25 : 51] She was dead, dead. And at Jesus' word, her spirit returned. That's resurrection from the dead.

So this was the hopeless situation. She was really dead. We come to the last point. The dead girl raised to life. The crowd that laughed at Jesus was excluded from witnessing her resurrection.

Verse 40, after he had put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, Talitha kum, which in Aramaic means little girl, I say to you, get up.

Kids, they were words like her mother might have used in the morning when she went into her room and said, little girl, get up. That's the way Jesus did it. And yet, these words were no mere words like a mother has ever spoken to a child or like you and I would ever speak.

These were the words of God the Son. And with the words went almighty power to bring about what the words said.

[27 : 04] So that as soon as he said, little girl, get up. Immediately is the word. Immediately. The girl stood up and started walking around.

There's an imperfect. It means she kept doing it. A moment ago, she was a pale corpse. A body without a spirit. Now all at once, her spirit returns. Her heart starts beating. Her lungs are working.

And she springs up. Her spirit returning. She springs up and starts walking around the room. And at this, they were completely astonished.

He then gave strict orders not to tell anyone, not to let anyone know about this. And he told them to give her something to eat. Such detail that it reveals. There was clearly an eyewitness there.

Every detail was recorded. Now, as for the strict orders not to let anyone know about this, Calvin comments, perhaps this prohibition was not so much about the fact of the miracle, but the manner of it.

[28 : 11] I think that's helpful. The fact of the miracle would be impossible to keep hidden. I mean, she's going to walk out of there alive. And everyone who sees her is going to know she's risen from the dead.

But the manner of it, all the details of it, they would not know that. And especially not this noisy crowd that was ridiculing and laughing at Jesus.

No, it would be kept hidden until it was time to be revealed for the glory of Christ. And that's why we have it in our Bibles today. There did come a time when it was time to reveal the very manner down to every detail.

And so these parents, they're completely astonished, dumbstruck with astonishment. Much like on the stormy sea when Jesus spoke and the wind and waves obeyed, the disciples said, Who is this? Who is it that just speaks and wind and waves obey him? Who is this who just speaks and legions of demons obey him?

[29 : 15] Diseased obeys him. And now death itself obeys his word. Releasing its prey. Well, he's none other than the sovereign Lord of life.

The master of death. This is your Lord, O church. Look to him in all your hopeless situations and trials. Fear not. Not only believe his words, his promises, and you too will find that it will happen just as he had told you that it would.

Let me close with three lessons about Jesus' power over death. The first is Jesus Christ can bring the spiritually dead to life. The Bible teaches us that we're all born spiritually dead.

We're all spiritual stillborns. And it's a death far worse than physical death. And it leaves us hopeless without the Lord Jesus intervening.

Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1. As for you, he's talking to Christians in Ephesus. You were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live.

[30 : 19] You see, to live in sin as your element is to be in a condition of being dead toward God. How responsive was Jairus' daughter when she was dead?

How responsive was she to her mother and father's tears? Not at all, was she? How responsive to all the weeping and wailing of the mourners and the sad tunes of the flutes?

Not a thing. She was dead to it all. And even so, every one of you were dead. Dead, spiritually dead.

Dead to the most important reality. The fact that God is. God exists. And even so, you were unresponsive to this God.

You had no genuine love back to him for all of his goodness to you. You had no love for his holy commandments, his gospel. No desire for his will to be done in your life.

[31 : 16] No love for his church, his people, his day, his glory. No personal relationship with God.

You were spiritually dead toward him. Oh, but you were very alive to sin, weren't you? Sharnock says, every sin is a pretending that God is not.

And that's the way we live. If God was intruding into our thoughts, it was an interruption. We'd rather have it out. Sin was our element. And we were very alive to that.

To the ways of the world, its pleasures and priorities and values. Alive to the temptations and lies of the devil, who is the spirit, who's at work in those who are disobedient. Very alive to gratifying the cravings of the sinful nature, its desires and thoughts.

Very alive to having your will be done. Your kingdom come. Your name glorified. And being spiritually dead in your sins, you were condemned and hopeless.

[32 : 23] And what is more hopeless than being dead toward God? But by the grace of God, many of you were given new life in Christ. You were made alive in Christ.

When? When you were dead in transgressions and sins. For by grace you have been saved.

Romans 6, 11 and 13 describe the believer as being alive unto God through Jesus Christ.

As those who have been brought from death to life. So that now you're alive to God. You're alive to his word. You're alive to his ways.

You're very alive to his presence with you. The most important things to you are now to know him and to please him. To follow him.

To live for him, with him, and by him. You've been made spiritually alive to God. It's a new life, isn't it? So different. Everything's different with God in the picture.

[33 : 25] You're now alive to him. Oh, but some of you are still dead in sin. You're spiritually dead. Walking dead. And I must break it to you. You don't know what life is. That's what the Bible says.

You're dead. Left to yourself. Nothing is more hopeless. But there is a way to cross over from death to life, Jesus says in John 5, 24. And it is the Lord Jesus.

He is the way to cross over from death to life. He is the truth. He is the life. All life is found in Jesus. Life. Eternal life.

Life as it was meant to be. Life in fellowship with the triune God. And so he is the only hope of life for the spiritually dead.

Just as he is the only hope for the physically dead. So whoever you are, whatever you've done, come to him. Just as you are. Renouncing your way.

[34 : 25] Pleading mercy because of what Jesus has done for sinners. And because of his promise that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Hold on to that promise and get to Jesus.

Run to him. And begin a new life today. And if you've got sons and daughters and granddaughters and friends and neighbors and lost ones that your hearts are burdened for.

Just one word from Jesus and they will live. So keep praying. Get desperate. Like Jairus. And beg on your knees before God to give life to those who are now spiritually dead.

He can breathe new life into a whole valley of dry bones. Call on him. Second lesson is that Jesus' power over death is not only power to bring the spiritually dead to life.

But his power over death at Jairus' house foreshadows his triumph over his own death. Because in just two years after this, Jesus himself was to enter into death for us.

[35 : 31] He claimed that on the third day he'd rise from the dead. But would death obey him? Would death yield to his voice? And of course, history says the grave could not hold him.

Peter says it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. Ever tried to hold on to something slippery and you just can't hold on to it? It was impossible for death to keep its hold on Jesus.

One minute a lifeless corpse. The next minute his spirit returned. Heart beating. Lungs breathing. Life coursing through his veins. Up.

Walking out of the grave. Triumphant over it by his mighty power. When the women came to the tomb early in the morning to prepare his body for burial. He was gone. But the two angels said, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

He's not here, but is risen as he said. When John sees Jesus in vision, Jesus says, I am the living one. Behold, I was dead. But am alive forevermore.

[36 : 34] So, that's the same Jesus that is here in Jairus' home showing his power over death. And then thirdly, Christ's own victory over death is a pledge of what he will do when he comes again in glory at the end of the age to restore this fallen world.

To make it a place where righteousness dwells. He's coming back with a voice that will wake the dead. Christ has been raised from the dead.

The first fruits of all of those who have fallen asleep. There again is that language for death. Jesus is the first fruits, but when he comes again, he will raise all of his people.

For our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a savior from there who is able by his power to subdue everything. And he will transform our lowly bodies and make them like his glorious body. Alive forevermore. There's coming a resurrection day far more astonishing than what happened at Jairus' home. That was one little girl.

[37 : 43] And she died again. We're going to see a resurrection of millions who have died. A number no man can count. And they will never die again.

Death will be swallowed up forever. And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Isn't that wonderful to think of the death of death? That's what's going to happen when Jesus comes back and swallows up death forever.

And that's what enables every believer to face our own death. With the taunt that Paul has in his lips.

Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin. The power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[38 : 45] The sting of death is sin. Sin is the thing that makes death so dreadful and stinging to us. Because for those with sin, death drags us before the judge against whom we've sinned to receive the just penalty for our sin.

And not only is sin the sting of death, but the law is the power of sin, he says. It's empowered and it's empowered to condemn us.

The only thing God's law has to say to you outside of Christ is damn her. Damn him. We are under the condemnation of the broken law outside of Jesus Christ.

That's the power of sin that makes the sting felt so deeply. We're guilty. We will be silenced in his presence.

And the law will say, look, she's broken it. Look, he's guilty. And if we've broken one law, we're a lawbreaker. We're guilty of breaking it all.

[39 : 54] But for those who are in Christ, you see, the sting of death has been taken by Christ himself. He suffered the condemnation. He took our sins upon his body and bore them to the cross.

And there the broken law took out its condemnation upon him. That's why he cried. It is finished. Finished.

So that today he can cry from his throne. Fear not, believer. Only believe. Believe that I finished the payment for all your sins. I blotted them all out with my blood.

You are forgiven. They are remembered no more. Fear not. Fear not death. Only believe. You know, Christ has saved us from the fear of death.

His power and victory over death has set us free. Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 12 or 14 and 15. He died our death to sin.

[41 : 04] And by his death, he destroyed him who holds the power of death, that is the devil, and frees those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. Brothers and sisters, we've been set free from the fear of death.

We don't need to fear death. Christ's triumphant cry. It's finished. It's finished. It should calm our fears. So his victory over death has changed the way we die.

It's taken away the fear. It's also changed the way we grieve the death of loved ones in Christ who have gone before us. Remember that passage in Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4 and verse 14.

Brothers, I write these things to you. Because I don't want you to be ignorant about those who have fallen asleep as a Christian's death. Because he's not going to stay dead.

He's coming back. I don't want you to be ignorant about them. And I don't want you to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope. No hope. We don't need to.

[42 : 10] Why? Because we believe that Jesus dies and rose again. So we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. He's coming back with a loud command.

A voice that will raise the dead. We will be with Christ forever and ever. With those who have gone before us. That ought to change the way we grieve.

We're not like the rest of men who have no hope. We are not hopeless in the face of death. We have a promise. We have gobs of promises about the resurrection.

Jesus, the resurrection and the life. Stop wailing, Jesus said. Fear not. Only believe. I close with a count of John Chrysostom, a minister of the fourth century.

And he was preaching on this first Thessalonians four passage about the Lord's return and the reason we don't grieve like men who have no hope. And he was deploring the long, the loud public lamentations that were being made at Christian funerals in his day.

[43 : 19] He says, when I behold the wailings in public places, the groanings over those who have departed this life, the howlings and all the other unseemly behavior. I am ashamed before the heathen, the Jews, the heretics who see it.

And indeed, before all who for this reason laugh us to scorn. He says, such conduct just undercuts the gospel that I'm preaching, that Jesus died and rose again, that we too might rise again to eternal life.

What is the world to think when they see us, believers of the gospel, tearing our hair and shrieking hysterically in the presence of death? Those who are really worthy of being lamented are the ones who are still in fear and trembling at the prospect of death and have no faith at all in the resurrection.

And then he closes his message. May God grant that you all depart this life unweiled, unweiled, stop the wailing. Yes, there's grief.

There is grief and death, but there's not to be. The grief of those who have no hope. Rather, in death, our hope ought to be shining the brightest.

[44 : 35] We have something that is sure. We have life eternal. We have hope where they don't. So may God help us to lose our own fear of death and to lose that excessive grief over those in Christ who have gone before.

It's appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment. So I need to ask you, how will it go for you on your day of death? Will it be a day of wailing and weeping? How will it go for you in the day of judgment when you stand before Almighty God?

And if there's but one sin that is not covered by the blood and righteousness of Jesus, I can tell you how it will go with you there. Jesus tells us how it will go with you there.

Depart from me. You cursed. I never knew you, you worker of iniquity. And I find it interesting that Jesus describes the hell of unbelievers with the very words that were used at Jairus' house in the Great Commotion.

It will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth forever. What is more hopeless than that?

[45 : 50] No hope. No hope of intermission, of ending. And a memory and a conscience that will gnaw at you like a worm that never dies, reminding you of this day and every other day you heard the gospel presented and Jesus set before you, offering you eternal life, and you reject it.

Rejected. Judging yourself to be unworthy of eternal life. But why? It's still a day of grace. You can still get from death over to life.

He is Jesus, the way, the truth, and life. Come to him and he will save you. Pray with me. Father, we began this service praising the Lord and we ended praising the Lord.

Hallelujah. That you didn't leave us in our sin. That you did not leave us in our chosen death in sin. That did not want you.

That you sent your son and didn't spare him, but took him to the cross and gave him the sting of all stingers. Our condemnation poured out in that cup of wrath for us.

[47 : 06] So thank you, Lord Jesus. Thank you that you've given us a reason to be full of hope in life and in death. Bring others this day to put their hope in you.

None would perish without hope when such a gospel is so near, even as near as our Savior who is here by his spirit. We ask it for his glory and for the good of others.

In Jesus' name, amen. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.