

Dying Well

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[0:00] Joshua 24, verses 28 to the end. Then Joshua sent the people away, each to his own inheritance. After these things, Joshua, son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110.

And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath-serah, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel.

And Joseph's bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem.

This became the inheritance of Joseph's descendants. And Eleazar, son of Aaron, died and was buried at Gibeah, which had been allotted to his son Phinehas in the hill country of Ephraim.

I want you to put on your thinking caps at the beginning. And we want to begin with a riddle.

[1:18] Do you like riddles? If you're like me, you're not any good at them, but here we go. This is the riddle. This thing, all things, devours.

Birds, beasts, trees, flowers. Gnaws iron, bites steel, grinds hard stones to mill.

Slays king, ruins town, and beats mountain down. Does anyone know what the answer is? Time.

Wow, you guys are so smart. Or you've read a certain book. Well, Bilbo didn't have any idea what the answer was. He was thinking, what monster could that be?

He was racking his brains for all the ancient monsters that he ever heard of or knew of, and none of them could match that riddle.

[2:22] And so finally, when Gollum was ready to start eating him, he cried out, time, time, I need more time. And of course, that's the answer.

Time beats and grinds all men down. Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away.

Something very interesting happened to me as I was preparing this whole series of Joshua. One of the books that I was using was called Gleanings in Joshua by A.W. Pink.

And about four chapters ago in Joshua, I noticed a major change in the book. It went from being extremely thorough, some 30 or 40 pages on a single chapter, to all of a sudden, now really important chapters that I thought really could use a big dose of some commentary, were summed up in six or seven pages.

And I didn't know what to make of it. And I just happened to read the publisher's preface one time.

[3:39] It was this little blurb at the very beginning. And there was the answer. A.W. Pink had died before he had finished it. And some other man stepped in and added his, probably at the very last minute, his bit to the end.

So, time had borne one of its sons away. So, here we are at the end of Joshua, the very tail end. And now the author is beginning to tie up all the loose ends.

He's putting this in a nice bow. And where he began, he is going to now end. Where did the book of Joshua begin, do you remember?

The Lord came to Joshua and he said, Moses, my servant, is dead. The servant of the Lord is dead.

And now here we are at the very end. And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died. It began with death.

[4:50] It ends with a death. And so those are the bookends. And the whole book fits up, fits together, fits in between those two deaths.

And this very last bit, it doesn't record just Joshua's death. No, Joshua died. And Eleazar died. And together with Joseph's bones, they were all buried in the promised land.

It is the end of a generation. That generation lasted just a little bit longer as the elders who were alive when Joshua was the servant of the Lord, was serving the Lord.

The people stayed faithful just through them. And then we know what began to happen afterwards. Another generation came.

And they forgot what the Lord did. And we go into the cycle of the judges. Of remembering and forgetting and calling and falling and all of the rest.

[5:59] And it's pressing us towards the book of Judges. It's pressing us to this reality that this people needs a king. We need a king.

But so this is the end. It's the end of a generation. And it teaches us to say with Moses, the servant of the Lord, in Psalm 90, teach us to number our days.

Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Numbering your days. We would like to think that our days are infinite.

That there is no number for them. But to number your days means to say, no, I only have so much time. A finite amount of time.

And it's not very long at that. That we may gain a heart of wisdom. And so tonight, as we end Joshua, I want to end with this very solemn and yet necessary topic of death and dying.

[7:01] It's solemn. It's uncomfortable. Because we would all like to live without thinking about death. We'd much rather put that out of our minds.

It's serious and it's solemn because death is the last enemy. And the enemy it is. In some ways, the most fearsome of enemies. But it's necessary because like Moses said, how can you ever live a life worth living?

How can you ever live a wise life? If you're not thinking that this life is going to come to an end. If you don't include in your data, in your information, that last horrific fact.

The biological processes. Will end. And your time. And that body. Will be cut off. And that complex balance between breathing.

And the heart beating. The complex balance and processes that keep those going will. Go too far out of balance. It's like you're walking the narrow tightrope.

[8:16] And all it really takes to get it. To fall off is for your center of mass. The center of your mass to get off center. And once it is. And you've gone too far.

There's no regaining it. And you fall off. And so. That will happen to us. Your heart will skip a beat. And then it will skip another one.

And another one. And you'll breathe out. And for the first time ever. You won't breathe in again. And you and me.

We will die. And we have to talk about it. Because it's real. And it happens. And learning to number our days. Is a right. Is the path of wisdom.

And so we just have five points this evening. And the first two are very similar. And the three are application. The first is this. That all men must die. All men.

[9:17] Must die. Why must all men die? That is the great mystery. Doesn't.

Why do all men die? Because Adam. The first man. The head. The representative. Of our race. Who stood as our covenant head. He. He sinned.

And the Lord said. The day. When you eat of that fruit. Fruit. From the tree. Of the knowledge. Of good and evil. For when you eat of it. You will surely.

Die. And that's where this tragedy. Begins. In Romans 5. We talked about the importance. Of is Genesis history. Well Genesis explains.

Why is this terrible thing. Called death. Even in our lives. Romans 5. Therefore. Just as sin entered the world. Through one man. Adam. And death through sin.

[10:15] And in this way. Death came. To all men. All men. Adam's sin.

Was the door. And in that way. We all became sinners. And death. Came. Through this door. Of sin. And it came. Into. All men. And we can say. That's not fair.

I didn't sin. That way. I wasn't in the garden. Why should I die. For his sin. But I think. A little. Honest. Self-examination.

Says. You know what. I've ratified. His rebellion. A hundred times over. That is a very. Dishonest.

Complaint. It's like. We want our cake. And we want to eat it too. We want our sin. But we also want to complain.

[11:10] When death. Comes to us. And so. The wages of sin. Is death. So all men. Must die. And you see it here. Joshua lived to be. A hundred and ten years old. Old. And we're sort of used to.

In. Reading. Biblical genealogy. Well that doesn't seem very old. But. By this point. In history. In this point. In time. Moses could say. In Psalm 90. We have.

We live 70. Or 80 years. If we have the strength. And so. Joshua is a hundred and ten. Is a really. Long. Time. As it is today.

But he died. All men die. Kings die. I just finished reading. A history. Sort of history biography.

Of Louis the 14th. In France. And he was called. The sun king. Because under his. Reign. France reached. Its. Its. Zenith.

[12:07] Its. Epic. Its. Its. Its greatest power. But in his 50s. His teeth began to fall out.

When he reached his 60th year. He had no teeth. And he developed diabetes. And gout. And a whole list of other diseases. And ailments. All throughout his grand palace.

At Versailles. Which he built. You see inlaid everywhere. And staircases. And chairs. And tables. And furniture. And everywhere. The image of the sun.

It's. It's. It's his image. It's his picture. I'm the sun king. And. He lived his whole life. For that glory. And for the fame. And.

He was always so very careful. To portray himself. In godlike. Glorious. Ways. But in the end. He died of gangrene.

[13:06] His legs. Rotted. Off of his body. Great. Wealthy. Glorious king.

The greatest medieval king. To walk this earth. And he dies. Famous. Talented people die. Last year we saw Prince.

The musician die. And he flew away. And he met the king. Of kings. Wealthy people die. John D. Rockefeller made his money. At Standard Oil Company.

And. When Standard Oil. Was broken up. As a monopoly. Amazing thing was. When it was broken up. He got richer. And then.

The automobile. Became. More and more popular. And with the automobile. Gasoline. All of a sudden. Became popular. And the richest man. In the world. His wealth. Blew up.

[14:07] Money was no object. He could buy. Anything. He wanted. He could buy. Anything. He wanted. But what he wanted.

More than anything. Was to live. To be a hundred. And so. He bought into. All sorts of ideas. About how you can. Extend your life. He would chew his food.

Like 50. A hundred times. Even soup. People hated. Eating with him. Because it took forever. But he did all sorts of things. For his health.

And that was a singular. Focus. And this is a man. Who knew. How to focus. And it looked like. He was going to make it.

But at 98. His body. Disagreed with his mind. And he died. And I have no idea. What's on his gravestone. But.

[15:02] It very well could be. Job 27. The house he builds. Is a moth's cocoon. He lies down wealthy. But will do so no more.

When he opens his eyes. All of it is gone. He died wealthy. But he woke up. On the other side. And it was all gone.

So kings. Talented. Famous. Rich. Poor. Nobodies. Men. Women. Young. Old. Slave. Free. Christian. Non-Christian. First world. Second world.

Third world. Northern hemisphere. Southern hemisphere. Eastern. Western. United States. You name it. All men die. There's only been two exceptions.

Enoch. And Elijah. Only two exceptions. And unless the Lord returns beforehand. That means everyone here. Will die.

[16:01] We have to die of something. And the refrain of Genesis 5. Is going to roll through our church. And roll through our families. And roll through us.

All. And what is that refrain? And then. He. Died. And then. He. Died. And then. He. Died.

And after death. Judgment. A reckoning. An answer. An explanation. Must be given for the life that you had. You will be held accountable.

You will answer for that life. And so let me ask you. Are you. Going to be safe. On that day. Are you going to be safe.

On that day. When you wake up on the other side. And you have to give an account. And are you saved. Will Jesus own you then.

[17:04] Will he own you then. And say father. This one is mine. This one is mine. Or will he say. I don't.

Know you. Away from me. You evil doer. So. We're all going to die. And we're all going to face the judgment. So how can we be made safe.

How can we be saved. On that day. Well we saw it this morning. In the worship. It's not because I belong to this or that church. It's not because. Oh I was baptized.

It's not because. Oh I've done. A generally pretty good job. With my life. I'm a good person. I am better than others. Those are all the wrong answers.

God is not grading. On the baptism. Or not baptism. The church membership. Or not church membership. The. Are your good deeds. Better than your neighbors.

[18:01] None of those are the criteria. The criteria is. Perfect holiness. It's his self. Do they measure. Up to me. Do their lives. Measure up to my glory.

Or do they fall short. And that is why. Jesus Christ. Has to be our savior. And all of our hope. Has to be in him. Because we fall short. In every way. So are you ready.

Is Jesus your savior. Will you be safe. Well Joshua died. Joseph died. And Eleazar died.

All men die. And you will die. And here's the second truth. Sort of a subsection. Of the first one.

All Christians die. Joshua. Joseph. Eleazar. Were all good men. Servants of the Lord. Righteous in their own generation.

[19:00] Righteous men. And they died. Death. An old age. And a last disease. Came upon them. Now this probably doesn't need to be said.

But it's something that I need to hear. And I'm sure it's something you need to hear. But. How we think. That somehow or other. It's just not going to happen to me.

Even because I am a child of God. And we somehow feel. Feel. It won't be me. That last thing.

Won't happen. I'll be able to keep it away. Longer and longer. But all Christians die. And it's that. It's that blunt truth. That Ecclesiastes wrestles with. Listen to what he says.

All share a common destiny. The righteous. And the wicked. The good. And the bad. The clean. And the unclean. Those who offer sacrifices. And those who do not.

[20:00] As it is with a good man. So it is with a sinner. As it is with those who take oaths. So it is with those who are afraid to take them. This is the evil. And everything that happens under the sun.

The same destiny overtakes us all. A righteous life. Is not the key. To living forever on this earth.

Will not happen. Cannot save you from the evil that happens under the sun. And will not save you from your last disease. Being wise.

And living a healthy life will not save you. And I say that as a person who respects. Living wisely. And having a healthy life.

There is this real. Bonafide doctor on. He puts on videos on YouTube. And. He looks at all the peer reviewed.

[21:03] Scientific research. He's not like a quack. He's. This is science. And this is what he wants to. To show people. And. And he shows. And all these different studies.

That he's gathered. And. And put together. You know. You eat your vegetables. And you eat your fruits. And you eat your. Your beans. And you sleep longer. And. And all this. You can.

In some way. Avoid. So many of the diseases. That happens to men. And he breaks it all down. Very scientifically. And it's paper after paper. And study after study.

And. He wrote a book. On all the things that he's. Learned. Or put together. And. The book is called. How not to die. And you can say.

This is really good. All this stuff is. Is hopefully pretty accurate. I'm going to eat my veggies. And I'm going to exercise. And I'm going to get plenty of sleep. And. And. And there's wisdom in there.

[21:59] And there's taking care of your body in there. And that's part of honoring God. And honoring. Your creation. And. Don't get me wrong. That's taking care of the temple of the Lord. And those are all good things.

But buried in that title. Is the lie. A lie. I can fall for. The lie. That if I just do all these things to a T.

If I just have the right. Thing. That just maybe. I won't die. But at best.

The book's title. Should be. How to maybe. Put off death. Maybe. For a little bit. But dear Christian. You have to die.

Something. Veggies. And exercise. Righteousness. And being a child of God. Will not spare you.

[22:54] From those things. And it's something. That has to happen to you. It happened to Joseph. It happened to Joshua. It happened to Eleazar.

And all men. Better than. We are. And the silver cord. Was cut. And the golden bowl. Was broken. Again. So generations come.

And generations go. It is the Lord that is forever. And so that's where we're going to start. With those truths. That's where we begin.

And now for the next three points. I want to ask. Well if that is the case. How do I die well? If that is the case.

How do I live. And die. For the glory of God. If it is something. That I have to go through. Then let me go through it. In such a way. That God.

[23:51] Looks. Good. While I'm doing it. That he is exalted. Just like what we saw this morning. That as I go through this. That process.

In this life. In those times. And I'm bearing his name. How do I go through it? Where he is exalted. Where my life.

And my death. Is a praise. A song of praise. To him. And so. Three things. And the first thing we can see. From the end of Joshua.

Is this. Is this. That dying well. Means finishing well. And what I'm talking about here. So dying well. Means finishing well. Is. What I'm talking about. Is running to the tape.

If you're in the race. You run. To the tape. You run. Through the line. You finish.

[24:46] As fast as you can. You push to the end. And that's what you see in Joshua. That's what. That's what chapters 23. And chapter 24. Are all about. And showing us. So here's Joshua.

He's old. Chapter 23 tells us. He's old. And well advanced. In years. But where is his heart? His heart. Is being.

With love for God. That's the only explanation. For this. He loves God. And he doesn't feel like. There's nothing for him to do. He doesn't feel like. Now's the time to just sit down.

And sit this one out. It's not the time for. Picking up seashells. On the seashore. As John Piper. Put it. No. The sense. Of coming. Death.

Motivates him. To press home. To keep going. And so. 23. Verse 14. Now I'm about to go. The way of all the earth. It's going to happen to me.

[25:40] But I've still. I've still work to do. And I might not have a lot of time. And I might not have a lot of energy left. But let me spend it for the Lord. And for his people. And that's what you see in those last two chapters.

His heart. It's on the Lord. He wants to see God honored. Among his people. He wants to see God honored. And believed. And obeyed. And feared.

In the next coming generations. And so he's. He's not living on old love. He's living on. I love God. Right.

Now. And I want to see him honored. And so where's his heart? Well it's on God's people too. All the instructions. And warnings. Don't turn away. Be strong. Fear the Lord.

Obey. Choose. All of that. Choose. What is that? It's. It's his love. It's his tangible. Concrete. Visible.

[26:38] Love. For others. He. Really. Still. Cares. About all of these people. So Joshua isn't done. He's not closing up shop. He's not falling in on himself. To his last days. He cared. He cared about God. He cared about other people. And so to his last day.

He was telling people. Take God seriously. I'm taking him seriously. You take him serious. Be serious about fearing him. And loving him. And so. What does that say about his heart?

Well his heart's still engaged. He's not resting on great things. That happened a long time ago. He's loving him now. He's loving him now.

And so out of the overflow of the heart. The mouth speaks. And so here he is still pressing in. Further up. Further in. And that's the glory of the Christian life.

[27:37] That is the glory of the Christian life. You are not done living that Christian life. Until you are done. You're never a washed up has been.

You see that so many times. You can read about that. Of people. One of the dangers of retirement. Is like you lose yourself. You don't have work to do. And people fret and wonder. Like how am I going to make it?

The Christian never retires. From being a Christian. The Christian never. We never retire. From loving God. And loving people. The arenas might change. The circumstances might change.

But we're never washed up has been. Now the great work. To love God. And to care for people. Is always there. And you see the same heart. In Paul. In his letters.

He says now I'm about to be. Poured out as a drink offering. The last liquid ounces. Of my life. Are going to. Be drained out of me.

[28:34] But he says. Let it be a drink offering. Let it be a drink offering. Let. Let the last. Liquid ounces. Of my life. Be for his praise.

For his pleasure. And that's finishing well. So how do you die well? You finish well. You keep caring. You keep your heart. Engaged with God. That love affair.

Goes on. And grows deeper. And grows sweeter. So it's ever up. It's ever on.

That's how you finish well. Well what else do you see? Well secondly. You see dying well. Means caring about what happens. To God's kingdom. To God's kingdom.

After you. It means. Caring. About God. What happens to God's kingdom. After you. So Moses died. And the first generation died.

[29:29] And now Joshua here. It will. God kept going. And the second generation. Is now dying. Has died. And God kept going. The story is going on. And it doesn't end with you.

And it doesn't end with me. God builds. His kingdom. Jesus Christ is building his kingdom. And it's a multi-generational work project. And so when one set of workers.

Passes off the scene. The Lord is still building. And so what. What does it look like to die well? Well you care about what happens after you. You care about that kingdom.

After you're off the scene. And you see this in the world all the time. I listen to NPR. I'm in the car. And instead of advertisements.

They're always giving me a list of foundations. That support this station. And I assume that. It's mostly people who have died. And left their money. And created these foundations.

[30:30] They believed in the mission. They believed in the mission of NPR. They said we want to. After we're gone. We still want this kind of radio. Going on. And so here's some money.

I want to see NPR prosper after I'm dead. And Christians. That's the kind of perspective we need to have. That's the kind of legacy. That we need to be thinking about.

Multi-generational. Why? Because I'm not always going to be here. But God's kingdom will go on. And there's more work to be done after that.

And so here's Joshua. And he's pouring out his life to the very end. And he's calling the younger generations to him. They're all younger people than he is. They're all younger. And he's calling them to himself.

And he's saying. You choose the Lord. He had words to give. And so he gives those words. And he's pouring this solid. This sharp truth. Into their minds.

[31:26] And into their hearts. That he wants to see them carry it on. He wants the next generation after him. To go on. So grandmas.

Grandpas. Do you have that vision? Do you see what Joshua was seeing? Do you see it? That's dying well. It's thinking about what's going to happen after you. And then doing something about it.

Joshua had words. He gave words. Some people have money. And they give money. But we all have influence. One way or the other. We all have influence.

On the next generation. And it's not just your children. Although that is prime real estate. Children. But it could be others. Younger ministers.

That's why we have interns. Younger ministers to learn. Younger teens. Young men and women. Or even just younger than you. If you're 60 or 70. And you can find a 30 or a 40 year old.

[32:28] To instruct. And to teach. And to get next to. And live. And love. And then you can disciple them. And so how long do you do that? How long do you use your influence.

For God's kingdom? Well. You do it until God says. No. Come up here and be with me. That's how long you do it. And that's what you see in Joshua. Chapter 23 and 24.

These are these. Bright. Shining. Spotlight. Lessons. This is how you use your influence. As an older person. This is how you. You need to be thinking. Multi-generationally.

This is how you think about a legacy. It's about caring what happens. To God's kingdom. After you. Third and last.

And really. What's driving all of this? What's driving all of this? Well. Can I tell you what's. What never drives it? Pessimism.

[33:31] Never drives it. Bitterness. Doesn't drive it. Hatred for that younger generation. That's ruining your world. That doesn't.

Drive any of this. What you see is. How do you. How do you die well? How do you go through this whole process? How do you live and. And.

And die. Well you. Well you keep hoping. And you keep expecting. And you keep believing. To the end. Keep hoping. Hope. That's not bitterness.

That's not pessimism. That's not. I hate this next generation. Hope. Expectation. Faith in God. And this whole business of Joseph's bones.

What do we make of that? Such a weird thing to put in here. Well what can it teach us? Well he's buried at Shechem. That's the place of the promise.

[34:29] Remember that? That's. Where God. Met Abraham. And that's. Eventually where. Jacob. Bought. A plot of land. But why?

Why. Was Joseph. So insistent. That I want to be buried. In that land. There's a lot of people. That died in Egypt. And that's where Joseph died. But that's not where he wanted.

To be buried. Well. I want you to turn. To the very end of Genesis. Take your. In your Bibles. Turn back. To the very end of Genesis. It's chapter. 50. The very last chapter.

And Genesis. Ends like Joshua does. With this. Death of. Joseph. And. Chapter 50. And look at verse 24.

And then Joseph. Said to his brothers. I'm about to die. But God.

[35:31] And listen to this. I'm about to die. But. God. Will surely come. To your aid. And take you up. Out of this land. To the land.

He promised. On oath. To Abraham. Isaac. And Jacob. And Joseph. Made the sons of Israel. Swear an oath. And said. God. Will surely.

Come to your aid. And then you must. Carry my bones. Up from this. Place. So Joseph. Died at the. Age of 110. And after they.

Embalmed him. He was placed. In a coffin. In Egypt. What was. Motivating. Joseph. What's behind. The oath. What's behind this.

I want to be. Buried there. Why is he. Thinking about. Something so far. In the future. Well. God. Will surely. Come.

[36:25] To your. Aid. Joseph. Was believing. In a God. Who kept promises. Joseph. Was believing. In a God. That was going to. Help his people.

Joseph. Was believing. That God. Loved his people. And cared about them. And no matter. How bad it got here. In the interim. That eventually. He was going to come. And he was going to. Rescue them. And draw them out.

And he was going to. Bring them into that. Promised land. What was Joseph. Focused on. To the very end. It was God. And his promise. God.

And his love. God. And his faithfulness. He was expecting. He saw. God's future work. He knew. What was going to happen. God is a God of grace. And he's going to come. And do this.

It wasn't going to end with Joseph. Joseph was expectant. To the end. He was expectant.

[37:21] He was hopeful. And not just hopeful. That all things are going to work out. He's hopeful in God. His. Both eyes are focused on the Lord. And he has a God that's big.

Bigger than Pharaoh. Bigger than Egypt. And he has a God that is loving. And kind. Kind. And faithful. And so that's what he's thinking about. And in hope. And in faith.

Looking to the Lord. He died at 110. And he died with Joshua. Saying God is our help. God is going to save. He's going to do great things.

And so old age. Approaching death. It didn't take away. His faith. It didn't take away. His optimism in God.

It didn't take his hope. And joy. In the Lord. It is Psalm 92. It is Psalm 92.

[38:18] They will still. Bear fruit. In old age. They will stay. Fresh. And green. Why are they still bearing fruit?

Why are they staying fresh and green? Well. This is what's going on inside of them. Proclaiming the Lord is upright. He is my rock.

And there is no wickedness in him. So how do you face death? The Lord is upright. He is my rock.

And there is no wickedness in him. How do you hand off the mission. And the kingdom of God. So to speak. To the next generation. How do you say. I want to see that happen.

And I want to see God's kingdom. Continue to grow. Well. It's right here. The Lord is upright. And he is my rock. There is no wickedness in him. It's that hope. In God. And how do you keep that heart.

[39:14] Burning to the end. With faith. Well. It's the Lord. Who he is. The Lord is upright. He is my rock. God will surely.

Come to your aid. He is that kind of God. And so that's our God. That's our God. Our God.

Our help. In ages past. Our hope. For years. To come. And so in that hope. And in that optimism.

We live. And in that hope. And in that optimism. We die. And that's how. We die well.