

Sermon February 8, 2015

## God's Grace at Life's End

Sanctity of Human Life Series

2 Corinthians 5:1-9



Dear Friends,  
Grace and Peace to you for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Our text of meditation this morning is from 2 Corinthians 5:1-9 where Paul counsels us with these words: “For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup> For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, <sup>3</sup> if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. <sup>4</sup> For while we are

still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup> He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. <sup>6</sup> So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, <sup>7</sup> for we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup> So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.”

For the last few Sundays we have been pondering and learning God's will regarding the issue of Life's End, in relationship to the world's view of euthanasia or mercy killing to stop suffering and or an undesirable bad quality of life that a person might experience in life.

Two Sundays ago we learned that God's will is for us to allow Him to decide on our time and that the goal of the Christian is always to care, *never to kill*. All in God's time as king David said in one of his psalms: “My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors! (Psalm 31:15) suffering and a bad quality of life can be the persecutors for sure, yet it is God who will deliver us. It is He who gives and takes, as Job said: “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1:21)

And last Sunday we learned that the best way for us to care is by being with those who are in need. Our presence and care will certainly demonstrate and give a testimony of God's care, in a twofold manner, the care giver not only gives care but also receives care even from the one who is being cared for. Thus we witness God's grace, show mercy and experience a togetherness in life.

Now, although our aim is to care never to kill, there comes the time when a decision needs to be made as to “pulling the plug,” discontinuing any medical care, or no resuscitation instruction be given. Perhaps we have done it already for somebody else, or somebody else has left instructions regarding their lives' end.

Now, what if the decisions made weren't the right ones? There is that question, isn't there. And more questions like “are we doing the right thing?” “Is it ok?” “Is it

God's will?" "What if the decision we made or are about to be made, on behalf of somebody else, is really what the person in need wanted?" "What if not?" What if what we thought was right was in actuality the wrong decision?" In some cases the circumstance will more than clear for a proper decision to be made, either because it was the will of the person in need or medically there is no more that can be done, but cases might not be so black and white!

Those are difficult decisions aren't they! But they need to be done. The material we are using for Bible Study, tells us this: "... In such matters it is not always clear what is right or wrong and we live by grace entirely. Medical ethics is an opportunity to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

And in the principles the material gives, principle 10 tells us that: "Any decisions made in this highly complex area, and any actions taken that may later appear to have been wrong, have been redeemed by that forgiveness which is available to all who put their trust in the work and merits of mankind's Savior and Redeemer."

So, do you at times feel that maybe the decision that was made to prolong somebody's else's life might not have been the right decision or for that matter, the plug was pulled earlier? And not there is now an unsettling guilt that doesn't go away?

Remember that you are covered with God's grace, and his forgiveness extends to all, he knows our pains, our suffering, our guilt and hear our confession, granting us the forgiveness of our sins. Sometimes our flesh and our own thoughts interfere with God's plan for ones' life's end, that's why we are encouraged that when we are faced with those kinds of decisions we would spend time in prayer seeking God's will, so that we would not interfere, yet because of our flesh sometimes we are left with an unsettling guilt. But remember that in Him there is forgiveness and restoration, in Him there is healing and peace. And because of the faith of one for whom a decision was made, because his or her baptism, because of what Jesus did for each one on the cross of Calvary, that loved one is with God in the "heavenly home" He has prepared. And "what is mortal" was "swallowed up by life" eternal life in Christ!

That's the hope we have in Christ, isn't it. That when our day comes that which "is mortal" is going to be "swallowed up by life" eternal life in Christ. It is good to have that hope and it is also good that those who care for us, or will care for us know so that when at our funeral service that "celebration of life" be it the life in Christ.

Having a detailed will and testimony of faith helps the decision maker to take the right decision. What would that will and testimony be? In short a desire to live in the Lord, either in life, that is in this body, or as Paul puts it "our Tent" or to be with God in our heavenly home.

"For we know" he says, "that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup> For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, <sup>3</sup> if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. <sup>4</sup> For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life."

There is that factor of a "worn out tent" the recognition that there is nothing that can be done to remediate it, to mend it, to fix it. It is time to be clothed with the eternal, heaven, in God's presence. "For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is

destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

In other words when our body dies, death is nothing else but the transition from this earth where “we groan” and are “being burdened.”

Or as Job would say: “Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble. <sup>2</sup> He comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not.” (Job 14:1-2)

And that’s what God said we would do “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Gen 3:19)

But here is the good news, that “what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” Eternal life! This knowledge and trust will prepare us to be ready to meet our Saviour face to face. And this will also motivate us instructions regarding our departure so that those who are to made life’s end decisions might do so in God’s grace and will. So I would like to encourage you to do so, to put in writing, instructions that you, of course after prayerful consideration, would leave to your loved ones, especially the ones that would care for you so that they would be free of any possible guilt.

There is a booklet that I would like to encourage you to get one, we do have some in the office we can provide you with. “The Final Victory – Contemplating the Death and Funeral of a Christian” This booklet explains some aspects of death and dying. The funeral services, why we do what we do, and it has a funeral planning worksheet you can use for yourself.

Now, some of us don’t want to talk about death, especially our own. And with good reason! But remember God’s grace. Our days are in His hands, including our ending! But as we hear from the apostle Paul today we should always be “of good courage” for we know where God is taking us, and more He is preparing us for “this very thing” death and so that we would be certain, He “has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.”

And the Spirit “helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groaning’s too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26)

Hear once more what Paul says: “We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, <sup>7</sup> for we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup> So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.” We do please Him enabled by the power of the Spirit always protecting and valuing life in the way God values it, always aiming at caring and never to kill.

Yes, some of the decision we take in care for life and even its ending might not be easy to make, for we live in this world infected by sin, but God’s grace covers us, and that grace will sustain us as God prepares us for what is to come.

“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” The “mortal may be swallowed up by life.” That is the promise, therefore “whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.”

In His name, amen.