

Assurance: One of the most difficult struggles a believer will ever face is grieving over a loved one who dies without believing in Jesus as Lord. We do not know what happens in the last moments of someone's life, nor can we judge the status of another person's heart. Even so, when we suspect that a loved one will live eternally separated from God, it is devastating. But when we lose a loved one who is a believer, we need to remember an important truth, we have the assurance of God's grace that we will be united with them again.

Anticipation: Look at Paul's attitude toward death in Philippians 1:20-26. Paul struggled with his desire to be with Christ. But, he knew that his work on earth was not complete. He looked forward to the day he would be united with Christ, not fearing death. What does the Word tell us in 1 Corinthians 5:51-57?

Victory: We should not waste our time focusing on the sting of death, but live eternally minded. We, with the apostle Paul, look for "the blessed hope-the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Jesus said, "No one knows about that day or hour" (Matthew 24:36). In the parable of the ten talents, the king instructs his servants to "occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). The return of Christ is presented in Scripture as a great motivation to action, not a reason to cease from action. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:58 wraps up his teaching on the return by saying, "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord." In 1 Thessalonians 5:6, Paul concludes with these words: "So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled." Jesus never intended for us to just "hold the fort", but instead we are to work while we can. "Night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4). The apostles lived and served with the idea that Jesus could return within their lifetime; what if they had ceased from their labors and just "waited"? They would have been disobedient to Christ's command to "go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). They understood that Jesus' imminent return meant they must get busy and do the work of the Lord. They lived everyday as if it were their last. We, too, should view every day as a gift and use it to go and tell of God's good news.

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Sermon Notes

