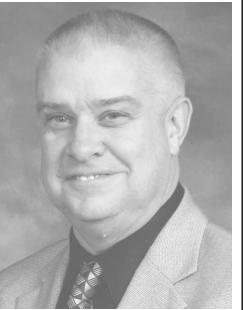


Pastor Bill's Ramblings

1 Thessalonians 4:13–14 ESV

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.



GRACE and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

From September 1st to October 1st we had 5 deaths in our church. This was not the worst run in since I became the Senior Pastor in 2008. In fact the worst run was a run of 13 funerals that Bob or I presided over right after Pastor Doug left in 2008. To date we have had 20 deaths since our last All Saints Sunday in 2015. Unfortunately death has always been a part of life. In Hebrews 9:27 KJV we read "*it is appointed unto men once to die.*" I came face to face with this possibility for my own life as I faced a Cryoablation procedure in November of 2015. I have had procedures done many times and they always give you an obligatory statement that you may die during the procedure. The percentage they quoted me was 1%. I do not know why, but this time it hit me. As I wrestled with God on this issue I gave Him all the reasons He could not take me now: my wife, my kids, my grandkids etc. Who would take care of them if I passed? Yet as I prayed and wrestled God gave me a peace and an understanding that He was faithful. If it was my time to go, God, Himself, would be faithful and I could trust in Him to take care of my family. I have rested in that peace since.

Yet coming at death from the angle that most of us have dealt with brings a whole different perspective. As many of you know my dad was diagnosed with Pulmonary Fibrosis (PF) last summer. A few weeks ago my mother told me that my dad had gotten much worse. This began a revolving door of visits from my brother and his family, my sisters, and me and my family. First off, I want to say to all of you who have taken the time to give long term care to a family member or friend, I have had just a small glimpse of what that means. I want to commend you for all your time, love, grace and frustrations

that many times goes unnoticed and unacknowledged. I never envisioned myself having to help my father change his clothes or help him out in the bathroom, etc. It was only a little over a week, but I could see that the day in and day out care is tedious at best, and overwhelming at the worst.

However, getting away from the long term care comes the issue that one day soon my dad will die. I, like all who are losing or lost a loved one, do not want this to happen. My dad and I have drawn close over the last 20 years and I would hate to lose him. My dad and I had a chance to talk about his diagnosis early on when he was in no pain or distress, yet we knew that PF was an incurable disease. He noted that he was not afraid of death and knew where he was going. I have watched him as the disease has become more debilitating and he has had periods of fighting for oxygen. I have had times when I have had a tough time catching a breath with my A-Fib and I can only imagine what that suffocating feeling must be like on a regular basis. I am beginning to wrestle with wanting to keep him here and letting him go home. It has not gotten to any decision making time yet but that could be right around the corner.

Romans 10:9-10 ESV

... because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

It is appointed once for each of us to die. Some of us are taken way too early in my estimation. Unfortunately, whether young or "up in years," we will all face death. Death comes to humankind because we all are affected with disease, the disease of sin. Sin is to the soul what cancer is to the body, it eats away at us. Sin, left unchecked will cause us to live in an eternity away from God and in eternal torment. The only eternal cure for sin is accepting Jesus as the Lord of your life, having complete faith and trust in Him. Although I do not relish the fact that I have had to face physical death so closely in our church and in my life, I do believe I have been blessed by facing death with those of you that I have faced it with in your circumstances and with a focus on Christ. I do pray that each of you knows Jesus as your Lord, that each one of you has accepted the cure for your disease and that you may rest in the hope and peace that only Christ gives.

Your Servant in Christ,
Pastor Bill