

## Day 29

### Death

Fears tend to cluster into three kinds: fear of not having enough money, fear of failure and rejection, and fear of death. The fear of death is the most formidable of these fears.

Here is where dictators derive their power. The one with the power of the sword wins, it would seem. So many fears find their way to death—fear of snakes, planes, elevators, crowds, bridges, driving in traffic. Panic attacks haunt us because we feel as though they bring us to death's door. Life, indeed, is very important to us.

The writer of Hebrews wrote about this fear—linking death to a larger consortium that included the devil.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Hebrews 2:14–15)

Though death is a formidable enemy, the apostle Paul showed how the death of Jesus Christ has radically changed this fear. “My desire is to depart and be with Christ . . . . But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account” (Philippians 1:23–24). Paul welcomed death. Yet the sting of death persisted for him when he was shaken by the near death of a close friend (Philippians 2:27). Paul acknowledged that death, indeed, remains an enemy until Jesus returns (1 Corinthians 15:22–26). Expect some of your fears to be channeled toward the fear of death.

This fear can have a few different sources. One is a fear of the *way* you will die. Death sounds better if you could die in your sleep after a nice evening with family and friends, with a brain intact and a body free of significant pain. But Jesus did not die such a death, and we who follow him know that the odds are against it.

We can easily envision the worst possible death because we have most likely seen a few. In response, we remember that today has enough troubles of its own, and we live in the grace that the Lord liberally gives us today. Don't try to imagine a diagnosis of cancer. You do not yet have tomorrow's grace so your imagination will tell an incomplete story of the future. If you are going to venture out into the future, continue far enough out so that the story ends with you welcomed into heaven for an eternity of no more sorrow, tears, and fears (Revelation 21:4).

### Response

1. Where does the fear of death show itself in your life?
2. Grace for today that fences off tomorrow—that is the skill we all need to grow in. How are you doing at staying in those boundaries? Which of God's words can you rely on when you are faced with the fear of death?