DEATH IS A DOORWAY

What you believe about life and death matters because it determines your eternal destiny. Let’s face it . . . death can be a scary concept because it is a doorway to something different. It’s different, but not unknown. Scripture is clear that because of Christ’s bodily resurrection, we as believers will also receive new bodies. Find comforting affirmation that God will do what He promised and give us an eternity with Him in *Life to Come: The Hope of the Christian Faith*.

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introduction

Life to Come
The Hope of the Christian Faith

We’re fascinated with near-death experiences. Books and TV programs explore the stories of those who tell of life beyond death. Some people tell of a momentary release from the body as they lay on an operating table while medical personnel frantically tried to revive them. Others testify of serious accidents that seemed to break the grip of this life.

While these stories are intriguing, they’re also inconclusive. But we do have evidence that there
is life after death—the record of what happened after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Could it be true?

This booklet explores the record and the significance of these events as discussed by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. Take a look at what he says. Then you decide, based on the evidence, whether or not there is life after death. It's the most important question you'll ever consider.

Mart DeHaan
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The tea was hot and strong, the morning cool and crisp. Sitting on the “hammock” (the word my wife’s grandparents used for their porch swing) presented the perfect opportunity to talk about what really matters.

“Papa” was a tough old man. He used to gauge the sharpness of his knife by sliding the blade across his calloused thumb. His stories enthralled me. During Prohibition he ran rum at night out in the Atlantic Ocean. In a rowboat, at the age of 12. Not knowing how to
swim! He caught giant tuna with a barrel and a rope and spent weeks at a time fishing George’s Bank in the north Atlantic—*still* not knowing how to swim.

But at 96 years of age, Papa knew he wasn’t going to live forever. It was unsettling to see how the anticipation of death affected him. Throughout his life, he understood that death was a possibility. (Working on the ocean without knowing how to swim will do that to you.) He never gave the danger much thought; he simply did what had to be done. Not much scared him.

But as we sat and talked about life and adventure, it turned out Papa was afraid of something after all. Papa was afraid of dying. It wasn’t just the pain and process of dying that scared him, it was death itself—and the uncertainty of what came next. Several recent heart attacks and a stroke had escorted him to the edge. Papa’s uncertainty of what, if anything, awaited him after death made him afraid like nothing else could.

We don’t like to talk about death, yet it comes for us all. When our hearts stop beating and our brains shut down and our last breath rasps from our lungs, is that the end? Is there nothing left but a body that eventually becomes dirt? Only memories that become stories with the passing of time and then fade into lost family history? Or is there something more? Yes, there is. Death is not the end; it’s a doorway. But how can we know what we are stepping into as we cross the threshold?
For almost 20 centuries Christians have been declaring the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave—Easter. Faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has changed countless lives. For those who have built their life around Christ as the only way to God, the empty tomb of Jesus is the key to the hope that they too will someday be brought back from death in a real body. It is the evidence that death is not the ultimate finale of our life. Death is no “dead-end”; it is merely a transition.

Throughout history many have chosen to die as martyrs rather than deny their faith. The Easter event is a factual historical occurrence with great significance for all of us. Believing or not believing in it is a matter that determines how we view death.

Many people harbor doubts about life after death, and not everyone accepts the accounts of Jesus’s resurrection as recorded in the Bible as history. To some it is simply a myth or a fairytale meant to inspire positive thoughts and feelings, a story to help people through the difficult time of the death of a loved one. Even some people who profess the Christian faith have doubts about some of the events recorded in the Bible, especially Jesus’s resurrection from the dead.

David Rankin, former pastor of a large church in
Grand Rapids, Michigan, told a journalist that he experienced Easter when he received a phone call informing him that his father had died. After the initial shock, he came to feel “an acceptance, with a purging and a healing, and a gradual drifting toward peace and understanding.” To him, this emotional journey was “the Easter event,” the hope that Christians have. He believes that his gradual transition from shock and sorrow to acceptance and even comfort is what Easter is about. Easter represents metaphorical new life, not physical new life. This view enabled Rankin to believe that in some way “death is conquered; that love builds enduring monuments; that every life has a purpose in the fullness of time.”

The difference between the biblical view and Rankin’s view of the resurrection of Jesus is drastic, and Rankin admits as much. “My heavens,” he said “if I really believed a person was resurrected from the dead, I’d go around shouting it all over the place, wouldn’t I? I mean, that’s amazing! I wouldn’t just go to church and sing a few hymns.” Rankin says that belief in a literal resurrection is old-fashioned and unscientific. To believe that a person came back from the dead—not merely resuscitated from a momentary stopping of the heart, but walking out of
a tomb after being buried for days—is simply unsuited for today’s mindset. Rankin insists that “dozens of cults” in the Middle East during Jesus’s day proclaimed heroes who lived lives remarkably similar to the stories the Bible records of Jesus—heroes who were born of virgins, worked miracles, got killed, and rose again. For Rankin, such alleged similarities signal the mythical nature of the stories about Jesus, that His “life and times” follow a popular formula for religious figures.

Rankin’s belief that the story of Jesus coming back from the dead is a myth similar to many others and that a literal resurrection is unscientific may sound well-reasoned, but research doesn’t support it.

The view that “dozens of cults” proclaimed a virgin-born, dying, and death-conquering redeemer has been shown false by many scholars of the legends and myths of ancient times. For a scholarly treatment of these myths, visit www.philvaz.com/apologetics/JesusEvidenceCrucifiedSaviors.htm

One Friday almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus of Nazareth died on a cross. Before the sun set that day, His friends buried Him. His enemies even sealed the tomb. But the Bible tells us that He left the grave the following Sunday morning. This is the Easter event! That morning when Jesus walked out of His own grave, when He showed that death is not the final word in the story of life, is the moment that changed everything.

It was not Jesus’s bold teaching that led the disciples out of hiding after His crucifixion. Despite the miracles that surrounded His death (READ THE ACCOUNTS IN MATTHEW
27:45–56; Mark 15:33–39; Luke 23:44–49), His crucifixion scattered them and sent them into hiding. But when Jesus walked out of His tomb, frightened followers became bold preachers; timid and uncertain disciples became convicted and tenacious proclaimers. We dare not underestimate the significance of Jesus’s coming back to life, for its impact was not only for Him, but also for anyone who follows Him.
Growing up on a cove of the Atlantic Ocean on Nova Scotia’s South Shore, Papa’s concerns were with immediate needs. Are the fish biting? If so, where? What will the weather be like for these 2 months at sea? Is the ice safe to walk on or will I fall through trying to cross?

He knew there was a larger world outside Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. But that world had little impact on him. The events across the ocean or even across the continent had little to no bearing on his day-to-day life. Stories of the city brought a wry and skeptical chuckle from
Papa. He didn't understand different ways of living. His experience was one of the biggest determining factors of acceptance and reality. He had a hard time understanding and believing things that he had never seen or done for himself.

**Jesus Christ came back** from the grave in a real body, and so will those who believe in Him. That’s the essence of the apostle Paul’s declaration in 1 Corinthians 15. He spends so much time discussing the subject of resurrection and life after death because some of the people at the church in Corinth were having a hard time believing it could be true. Some claimed there was no such thing as a resurrection, especially one that involved a literal body coming back to life. Apparently this group believed in God, saw the death of Jesus as paying the price for their sins, and professed faith in Him. But they seem to have carried some old ideas and philosophies into their new faith. They had been taught the humanistic philosophy that matter is bad, that the physical world was a lower existence and less desirable, and that at death we are released from the physical and taken into a spiritual existence—a much
better life. They tried to incorporate this idea into their Christian faith. This led them to think that a future bodily resurrection was not simply impossible, it was undesirable.

The Greeks in the time before Christ taught that matter is evil. This is not taught anywhere in Scripture, but nonetheless would have had an influence on Christians living in Corinth in the first century. The teaching that the material world is evil became a prominent tenet of the Gnostic heresies. But, in fact, God declared everything He created as “good.”

A Verifiable Event

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his
grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed (1 Corinthians 15:1–11).

Paul flatly declared that Jesus came back from death in a resurrected body. This doesn’t make it true, but he quickly built his argument by reminding the Corinthians of the message they had heard when they first believed in Christ: Jesus Christ died to pay the price for sin, was buried, and came back to life again just as the Old Testament Scriptures had prophesied.

But the people at the church in Corinth had not always had the Scriptures, nor did they necessarily believe what was written without proof. Citing Scripture was not enough for them. So Paul went on to remind them of how Jesus had made many appearances after His resurrection. Three specific meetings between Jesus and individuals took center stage as Paul argued for the reality of Jesus’s return from the grave—Peter, James, and Paul himself. Then he recounted two visits of Jesus to the apostles and one to a group of more than 500 people. That is quite a list of witnesses. Imagine a trial where over 500 people all testify to the exact same thing.

Paul clearly regarded his own Damascus Road experience as a physical encounter with Christ. While on his way to arrest Christians in Damascus, Paul (then known as Saul) was stopped when “a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’” (Acts 9:3–4).
But was all this persuasive? With this evidence, those in the Corinthian church would have faced a dilemma. On the one hand they did not believe in a future resurrection. On the other hand they knew that Paul and the others were not liars and they could not produce evidence to contradict the eyewitness accounts. Faced with evidence from personal eyewitnesses, the “anti-resurrection” group in Corinth had a problem, a flaw in their belief system. They had thought that resurrection was physically impossible and philosophically undesirable. If they admitted that Jesus had risen from the grave, they had to accept at the very least that a physical resurrection was possible. And if Jesus, God himself, came back to life in a physical body, what did that suggest about physical reality? After all, even if Jesus needed a physical body in order to die for sin, once that was accomplished He certainly wouldn’t have kept that same body if everything physical were bad.

If Jesus, God himself, came back to life in a physical body, what did that suggest about physical reality?

When we recognize that Jesus came back from death in a **real body**, we must reject the idea that the body is inherently evil. God wouldn’t have given Jesus a new body if He viewed material things as evil.

The evidence of the eyewitnesses was especially crucial.
Today we know of people who try to deny the Holocaust, but they don’t get very far. Why? Because we know survivors of the Nazi concentration camps! In 1981, 10,000 of these survivors held a 4-day gathering in Jerusalem. In an interview, Ernest Michael, a survivor of the Auschwitz and Buchenwald camps, held up his hands and said, “These hands have carried off more corpses than I care to remember. And some say that the Holocaust never happened! We know; we were there!”

But we are almost 2,000 years away from the resurrection. We can’t talk to eyewitnesses. How can we be assured that it really happened?

Many today face a similar dilemma. People want to accept the message of the Bible without accepting the facts and events of the Bible. But we can’t have it both ways. If the events of the Bible didn’t happen, then the Bible doesn’t teach us anything true about God. We can only really know God from the Bible if the events recorded actually happened. Real knowledge comes only from truth, not from fictional stories. To accept the message of the Bible and that we can actually know God from the stories written there, we must accept that the stories written in the Scriptures happened just as they are recorded.

In the 19th and 20th centuries,
critics of the Bible claimed that the resurrection accounts came from writers who lived during the second and third centuries. They spoke of these accounts as myths. But critics can’t honestly make that claim today. In recent years, portions of the New Testament have been discovered that demonstrate it was written when those who walked and talked with Jesus Christ were still alive.

William Albright began doing research on the reliability of the Bible with the assumption that the group of documents we know as the New Testament gradually developed over a period of several centuries. But after studying the evidence, he came to a different conclusion: “There is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after AD 80.”

And Albright is not alone. Another scholar who changed his mind was John A. T. Robinson. For many years he assumed that the New Testament was written long after Christ’s time. But when he decided to do some investigation on his own, he was stunned by what he discovered. He concluded that other scholars he had respected had not been honest with the evidence. His research led him to believe that all of the New Testaments have been discovered that demonstrate it was written when those who walked and talked with Jesus Christ were still alive.
Testament, including the writings ascribed to the apostle John, was written before AD 54, an earlier date than most scholars had given. He had so much confidence in his conclusion that he wrote an article for *Time* magazine in which he challenged his colleagues to prove him wrong.²

Both William Albright and John A. T. Robinson approached their study of Scripture from a somewhat skeptical viewpoint, so their insistence on an early date for the New Testament manuscripts is contrary to what they expected to find.

There aren’t many options when it comes to how we understand what is written about Jesus coming back from the dead. The writers of the New Testament accounts of Christ’s resurrection were alive when it happened. We can either believe that what they wrote actually happened or think of them as gullible fools or deliberate liars. Read the New Testament and draw your own conclusion as to whether they were gullible fools. But the possibility of them being liars is slim. A conspiracy breaks down when the people involved start suffering consequences.

Charles Colson, who was arrested and imprisoned for playing a role in the Watergate conspiracy during the U.S. presidency of Richard Nixon, said that as the scandal began to unravel, the conspirators, one by one, began to lay blame on each other. When consequences started to loom on the horizon, loyalty went out the window. Everyone involved had a single thought: self-preservation.
But with the apostles it was different. They faced something far more serious and more permanent than prison terms. One by one they were executed not because they were criminals, but because of the message they were spreading: Jesus had risen from the dead and believing in Him was the only way to be saved. They had nothing to gain by clinging to a lie. In fact they had everything to lose, and they did. But not one of them ever said, “We have been lying.” No one confessed, “We made the whole thing up; it was all fake!” That leaves only one possibility that really makes sense: They believed deeply enough to die for those beliefs, without a hint of doubt that what they were saying was true.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a verifiable historical event for which eyewitnesses were willing to die.

A Crucial Belief

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about
God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins (1 Corinthians 15:12–17).

Papa’s stories fascinate me. He grew up in a home with no plumbing. The family always used an outhouse (and Nova Scotia winters are cold) and dipped water from an old-fashioned well. They grew or caught most of their own food and improvised homemade solutions for life’s difficulties, like putting cod oil on the surface of the water when it was too cloudy to see. (It works!)

Papa tells stories about clearing land for a garden, cutting trees to have enough fuel to heat the house for the winter, foraging for blueberries on the “Commons.”

He knew what had to be done to survive, and nearly everything he did was done with that goal in mind. He understood how connected the different aspects of his life were. For him, eating meant more than simply finding food; it meant the hard work of the garden, the maintenance of the boat, understanding the movement of the schools of fish and where they would be at different times of the year, and how to catch them. If one of these things was ignored or the effort compromised, the whole family suffered.
It’s easy to dismiss his way of life as outdated. But living where daily activities are consumed by what is necessary for survival forms a tight connection to life in its simple, beautiful essence. Some things simply can’t be separated.

Some—even some who believe other claims of Christianity and the Bible—say that the idea of a second coming of Christ and a bodily resurrection is outdated. But the apostle Paul doesn’t leave room for that possibility. In his letter to the church in Corinth, he made it clear that anyone who does not believe in the resurrection of believers denies the entire gospel message—resurrection and salvation are inseparably linked. Without resurrection, there is no gospel. And once the possibility (or desirability) of a bodily resurrection is denied, we begin a process of reasoning that invalidates the gospel.

> We must take the same view of Christ’s resurrection in the past as we do of our resurrection in the future. If Christ’s resurrection was real, ours will be too. If future resurrection for believers is impossible or undesirable, the same must be said about the reported resurrection of Christ.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to see how dangerous
their line of thinking was. Some apparently thought they could deny the resurrection and still retain the basic elements of the Christian faith—forgiveness of sin, the power of the Holy Spirit, and ultimate victory over sin and death. But Paul declared that this denial attacked the very essence of salvation. If the gospel applies only to this life, it is a bad bargain. “Then those also who have fallen asleep [died] in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied” (vv. 18–19).

Paul came back to this idea in verses 29–32: “Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’”

Paul tackled the issue head on and declared in no uncertain terms that to deny a future bodily resurrection of believers is tantamount to rejecting the entire message of the gospel. And if the gospel is
not true and we have no real basis for hope, we may as well live by the philosophy, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (v. 32).

This suggests another reason why belief in the resurrection is so crucial. Those Corinthians who rejected a future resurrection seem to have abandoned other important teachings of the Bible as well, specifically the pursuit of good and upright moral character. Some had returned to pagan ways and even became involved in immorality. So Paul warned them: “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’ Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame” (1 Corinthians 15:33–34 emphasis added). The point that Paul is making is that belief in the resurrection of Jesus is a core element of Christianity, and compromise of those core beliefs is a slippery slope. Once the Corinthians started to deny elements of the gospel, they started to forfeit its life-changing power.

Paul said that Christ Jesus died for our sins; therefore, we should stop sinning. He rose again and appeared to many people. If we deny that Jesus died to pay the price for sin, we have no forgiveness. If we deny that He rose from the grave, we lose our basis for hope.
died to pay the price for sin, we have no forgiveness. If we deny that He rose from the grave, we lose our basis for hope.


three

Our Destiny

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him (1 Corinthians 15:20–23).

Papa was a fisherman. His dad was a fisherman. Looking back over the generations, most of the men in his family were fishermen. There was never really a question about what he was going to do for a living. Fishing was the “family business.” It made sense. He was born next to the ocean, spent a lot of
time on it as a boy, and relied on the ocean for food and transportation. Fishing was in his bones and in his blood.

There is a vital connection between Christ’s resurrection and our hope for resurrection. Jesus’s resurrection is God’s pledge that we will experience a similar miracle. Paul referred to Jesus’s rising from the dead as “the firstfruits.” Jewish believers knew exactly what Paul had in mind when he used that concept. Just before gathering the main harvest, Jewish farmers would go out into their fields and harvest a small portion. They would then take that portion and present it in the temple as an expression of gratitude to God and an indication of their confidence that a full harvest of the same grain would soon be gathered in. The firstfruits were gathered in anticipation of the rest of the harvest.

The harvest Paul had in mind when he referred to Jesus as the firstfruits is the gathering of all of God’s people. It includes all Christians—those who “have fallen asleep” (v. 20) and those who will be alive “when he comes” (v. 23). In our present bodies we are like Adam who sinned, and

When believers die, their spirits go to be with Christ. The Bible doesn’t give us a detailed description of this time between death and resurrection. The believing dead are “with Christ.” That’s all we need to know to be assured that it is a condition of blessedness. But it is never portrayed as the “blessed hope” or the goal of our salvation. The hope is always connected with the return of Jesus when we will receive resurrection bodies.
therefore we will die. But through faith in Jesus, we are related to Him and we will be resurrected and be like Him in resurrection. We are the harvest of which He is the firstfruits. Notice Paul’s statement, “But each in turn.” The resurrection of our bodies does not occur immediately when we die. It will take place “when he comes”—at His return. Because He was resurrected, so will we be.

When Christ returns, He will not be alone. With Him will be the spirits of all “who sleep in death” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). As “the voice of the archangel” and “the trumpet call of God” sound out, these spirits will receive their new bodies (v. 16), and in the next moment believers still living on earth will receive their resurrection bodies. In our resurrected bodies we will meet the Lord in the air and be with Him forever (v. 17). We live in Christ today. We will be with Christ when we die. And we will still be with Him after we are resurrected. Once we belong to Him we are never separated from Him.

**A Life-Changing Hope**

Paul’s discussion of the resurrection reaches a magnificent climax. We can practically feel the pulse of excitement in
his words. In 1 Corinthians 15:50–53, he summarized:

I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

In our present bodies, we cannot enter the eternal kingdom of God. We must be changed, transformed. We must be given a new body. God revealed to Paul the wonderful truth that a day is coming when the trumpet of heaven will sound signaling the return of Jesus Christ. “In the twinkling of an eye” believers who have died will receive their resurrection bodies and the living will be transformed from the earthly to the heavenly. All those who believe in Christ will receive new bodies! This thought caused Paul to burst out in unbounded joy and exultation: “When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where,
O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (vv. 54–57). The twin enemies of humanity—sin and death—will be defeated. Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection, has so completely defeated death that death will be “swallowed up.”

Paul elaborates on our new bodies in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

After this expression of resurrection triumph, Paul even went so far as to taunt death. “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin because it is through sin that death came into the human race. And the awareness of sin (whether conscious or subconscious) makes death a terrifying experience. But in our place, Jesus Christ fulfilled the law by obeying it perfectly, and through His death He paid the price for our sins and broke death’s power. He won the victory over sin and death. We don’t need to be afraid!

Paul closed his climactic section with a practical appeal. From theology and praise he turned to a challenge: “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (v. 58). We anticipate a reward for our faithfulness to God. In light of this great expectation, we can persist in serving our loving Lord no matter what comes our way. And we can do this with the assurance that the reward will far outweigh the cost. No matter how deep the
trials or how difficult the way, we will be overcompensated. The body in which we now live is ours during this lifetime. The choice we make now regarding Jesus determines where death’s door leads. Our decision about Jesus produces results both in the present and the future. Paul declared, “As is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven” (v. 48). Even though we are now subject to the temptations, pains, diseases, and deteriorating processes associated with our physical substance, we are already citizens of heaven and we wait with anticipation for the day when we too find what is waiting for us on the other side of death’s door.

Papa is still with us, and right now he is still afraid of death. But it’s never too late for anyone to come to Jesus. Knowing the risen Lord gives us the confident hope of our own resurrection. We can know that new life waits beyond death’s door.

For most of his life, Papa made little time to consider what may be “out there.” Simply surviving consumed his thoughts and energy. But now, at 96 years of age, he has more time to think, and he wonders, “Is there something more?”

Talk of God makes him smile faintly. “Maybe” is his only response. Faith is a hard concept for him. Life has been filled with the tangible and the immediate, things he can touch with his hands or see with his own eyes. But that self-reliance, as good and as beneficial as it was for
the time, has led him to a place of fear. It is now the unknown of what is out there that scares him.

In contrast to my wife’s grandfather, my own grandfather died 10 years ago. The last time I saw him, he spoke words that are forever etched in my memory. “I’m ready to go home,” he said, speaking candidly of his imminent death. As my wife and I were leaving, he gathered us together and prayed for us. Eighty-six years old, heart failing, knowing death would arrive at any moment, he wanted to pray for us.

The difference between the two grandpas is striking! One looks at death with fear and trepidation; the other viewed it with anticipation and a growing excitement. One is unsure of what is coming; the other knows the risen Lord and looks forward to rising again too.

Just after Jesus began His earthly ministry, He chose several fishermen to be His followers. We pray that one more fisherman soon responds to Christ’s invitation to follow Him.
Reflections
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