

## BREVITY AND ETERNITY

### I. Various Scriptures

A. It's hard to believe but another year has come and gone. They seem to race by quicker each year. My personal prayer list includes the names of those who have passed away the past few years. These include local folks, loved ones associated with our church, and some who've just found their way onto our prayerline. Not including this year, the average annual losses since 2013 have been about 35 people. This year the number is 58. For those who've lost loved ones, Christmas was different this year. Their New Year may also be filled with pain and uncertainties. May the Lord enable us to be vessels of comfort and encouragement to those suffering loss.

B. **Proverbs 22:1** (ESV) says: "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold." **Proverbs 10:7a** (ESV) echoes: "The memory of the righteous is a blessing..." **Please allow me to honor those we've lost the past 12 months by reading their names. It's not an exclusive list (each of you could add to it) but many of these names will sound familiar:** Grace Fausnaugh; Jean Fannin; Jim Niemeyer; Dean Chamberlain; Eddie Brison; George Kaylor; Jim Schrage; Nancy Hansberger; Darlene Hinson; Mike Johnson; Lesa Brown; Don Maynard; Mary Jo Alexander; Jackie Simmons; Katie Kittle; Flo Miller; Tom Rice; Harriet Refinati; John Jones; Shelby Miller; Matthew Schmutz; Tonya Lazary; Lois Neff; Wyatt Sloan; Donnie Meek; George Huffman; Doug Krueger; Larry Hoover; Clark Dixon; Mary McClintock; Lewie Wolfe; Esther Boyer; Merv Bartholow; Cory Hines; Donna Braig; Ron Jackson; Elaine McStraw; Craig Miller; Terry Runkle; Mary Lou Thomas; Chaz Coakley; Manny Mingo; Patty Luchtenberg; Harry Miller; Steve Reedy; Dave Moody; Bob Burleigh; Wanda Karr; Marilyn Bowers; Dave Fannin; Erma Gobert; Pat Turner; Gerry Brannon; Tommy Wills; Norma Jean Stidham; Robin (Mackey) Walk; Chuck Layman; Seth Eslich...

C. As we fondly remember loved ones laid to rest, two words come to mind: Brevity and Eternity. Brevity is the swiftness in which our time here is passing. Eternity is the forever future granted to those whose lives are in Christ. **Psalm 39:4-5** (NLT) speaks to brevity: **4** Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered--how fleeting my life is. **5** You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand. My entire lifetime is just a moment to you; at best, each of us is but a breath." **John 3:16** (ESV) speaks about eternity: **16** "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

D. Job knew about brevity and how suffering made it even worse. **Job 7:6-10** (NLT) is his incomplete picture of the here and now, juxtaposed with eternity. Here's what lacking eternal hope looks like: **6** My days fly faster than a weaver's shuttle. They end without hope. **7** O God, remember that my life is but a breath, and I will never again feel happiness. **8** You see me now, but not for long. You will look for me, but I will be gone. **9** Just as a cloud dissipates and vanishes, those who die will not come back. **10** They are gone forever from their home--never to be seen again. **Edmund Cooke said:** "Death comes with a crawl, or comes with a pounce, and whether he's slow or spry, it isn't the fact that you're dead that counts, but only how did you die."

E. But ultimately everything comes down to Jesus. Either you're with Him or your not. Either you believe in Him or you don't. Either your faith is proven by obedience or your lack of faith is verified by disobedience. Either your rapidly fleeting life is passing with eternal hope or your rapidly fleeting life is passing by hopelessly. Either you possess eternal life or you're facing eternal separation from God. Either Jesus has freed you from sin or you're still under the wrath of God. Either Jesus has borne your judgment on the cross or you'll face sentencing before the Great White Throne. It all comes down to Jesus and where you stand with Him. **John 3:35-36** (ESV) is an apt summary: **35** The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. **36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

F. At a recent Christmas party a guy told me how he'd told a lie on behalf of his daughter. While it got her out of a jam, his heart was sorely convicted that he'd lied. He finally had to come clean. He said something like, "I'm realizing that I'm closing in on the time I'll be answering to God!" He went on to tell the parties involved in his lie that he wanted no part in lying like that again. That's called repentance! That's what repentance looks like if you're a liar. So what does repentance look like if you're a thief? How about a cheater? How about a gossip? How about an adulterer? How about a sexual harasser? How about a child abuser? How about a tax collector? How about a self-righteous chest-thumping Pharisee? **John 3:35-36** (ESV) one more time: **35** The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. **36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

G. So back to brevity and eternity. Tell me you don't need Jesus to help you face both! You eat right, exercise, take vitamins and supplements and prescription meds to slow the weaver's shuttle down. You use lotions and potions--whatever necessary to keep the grass from withering and the flower from fading. But even though the inevitable is approaching, shouldn't Christ make all the difference?! And looking towards eternity, is there any encouragement in the Word of God as we head towards the inevitable at breakneck speed?! There's more than plenty!

**H. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (AMP) is one such Scripture. It's for believers. It takes us home today and straight into a Brand New Year: 16** *Therefore we do not become discouraged [spiritless, disappointed, or afraid]. Though our outer self is [progressively] wasting away, yet our inner self is being [progressively] renewed day by day. 17* For our momentary, light distress [this passing trouble] is producing for us an eternal weight of glory [a fullness] beyond all measure [surpassing all comparisons, a transcendent splendor and an endless blessedness]! **18** *So we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen; for the things which are visible are temporal [just brief and fleeting], but the things which are invisible are everlasting and imperishable.*

\* Close with Prayer...

### **Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff**

#### **Proverbs 22:1 (ESV)**

**1** A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.

#### **Proverbs 10:7a (ESV)**

**7a** The memory of the righteous is a blessing...

#### **Psalms 39:4-5 (NLT)**

**4** "Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered--how fleeting my life is. **5** You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand. My entire lifetime is just a moment to you; at best, each of us is but a breath."

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#### **Quote by Edmund Vance Cooke**

"Death comes with a crawl, or comes with a pounce, and whether he's slow or spry, it isn't the fact that you're dead that counts, but only how did you die."

- Edmund Vance Cooke, *The Lutheran Observer, Young Men's Column*, March 18, 1904.

#### **What Happens When We Die? - From the Westminster Confession**

"The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledges none."

- *The Westminster Confession*, (Chapter XXXII), 1646.

## Film Clips & Other Links

Millersport Covenant Church Sermon Podcasts (MP3s on iTunes)

<http://millersportcc.com/feed/podcast>

## Bonus Stuff

### 1 John 5:13 (ESV)

**13** I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

### Job 7:6-7 (Amplified)

**6** My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope. **7** Oh, remember that my life is but wind (a puff, a breath, a sob); my eye shall see good no more.

### Job 9:25-26 (NIV)

**25** My days are swifter than a runner; they fly away without a glimpse of joy. **26** They skim past like boats of papyrus, like eagles swooping down on their prey.

### Job 14:1-2 (NLT)

**1** How frail is humanity! How short is life, how full of trouble! **2** We blossom like a flower and then wither. Like a passing shadow, we quickly disappear.

### Psalms 103:13-19 (NLT)

**13** The Lord is like a Father to His children, tender and compassionate to those who fear Him. **14** For He knows how weak we are; He remembers we are only dust. **15** Our days on earth are like grass; like wildflowers, we bloom and die. **16** The wind blows, and we are gone--as though we had never been here. **17** But the love of the Lord remains forever with those who fear Him. His salvation extends to the children's children **18** of those who are faithful to His covenant, of those who obey His commandments! **19** The Lord has made the heavens His throne; from there He rules over everything.

### Psalms 103:15-18 (ESV)

**15** As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; **16** for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. **17** But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, **18** to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

### James 4:13-15 (NKJV)

**13** Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; **14** whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. **15** Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

### 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 (NLT)

**1** As God's partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it. **2** For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation.

### Quote by W.B. Hinson

"I remember a year ago when a doctor told me, 'You have an illness from which you won't recover.' I walked out to where I live 5 miles from Portland, Oregon, and I looked across at that mountain that I love. I looked at the river in which I rejoice, and I looked at the stately trees that are always God's own poetry to my soul. Then in the evening I looked up into the great sky where God was lighting His lamps, and I said, 'I may not see you many more times, but Mountain, I shall be alive when you are gone; and River, I shall be alive when you cease running toward the sea; and Stars, I shall be alive when you have fallen from your sockets in the great down pulling of the material universe!'"

### Quote by St. Ignatius

"Realize that illness and other temporal setbacks often come to us from the hand of God our Lord, and are sent to help us know ourselves better, to free ourselves of the love of created things, and to reflect on the brevity of this life and, thus, to prepare ourselves for the life which is without end."

### **Quote by Billy Graham**

"What is the greatest surprise you have found about life?" a university student asked me several years ago. "The brevity of it," I replied without hesitation. ... Time moves so quickly, and no matter who we are or what we have done, the time will come when our lives will be over. As Jesus said, "As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent Me. Night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4).

### **Quote by Adoniram Judson (Baptist Missionary to Burma)**

"You have but one life to live in which to prepare for eternity. If you had four or five lives, two or three of them might be spent in carelessness. But you have one only. Every action of that one life gives coloring to your eternity. How important, then, that you spend that life so as to please the Saviour, the blessed Saviour, who has done everything for you!"

- Adoniram Judson, from *The Life of Adoniram Judson-Volume 3*, by Edward Judson, pg. 473.

### **Quote by Phillip Brooks**

"Forgive, forget. Bear with the faults of others as you would have them bear with yours. Be patient and understanding. Life is too short to be vengeful or malicious."

### **Quote by Benjamin Franklin**

"You may delay, but time will not."

### **'Hard to believe:' Wallet returned after 63 years**

Memories flood back for man, 78, after discovery behind gym bleachers  
AP News, June 30, 2009.

BAKER CITY, Ore. - Bill Fulton doesn't remember losing his wallet, but its return helped him remember the past. The leather stayed smooth and the cowboy design unblemished. The zipper moved with ease. And when he looked inside, the contents brought back memories from 1946, when he apparently dropped the wallet behind the balcony bleachers in the Baker Middle School gym.

Fulton's Social Security card and bicycle license, bearing the address where he lived during his teenage years, were positioned in their respective compartments, apparently untouched since the year after World War II ended.

"After that long, my gosh, it stayed in good shape," Fulton told the Baker City Herald. "It's hard to believe."

Worker Nathan Osborne found the wallet — along with old homework, lost library books and a 1964 talent show program — while removing the bleachers for renovations on June 17. It was brought to Fulton's door the following day by Melanie Trindle, the Baker Middle School secretary.

"He was pretty much amazed," Trindle said. "He just kept saying, 'Thank you. Thank you so much.'"

Middle School Principal Mindi Vaughan said the brown pine bleachers were connected to the gym balcony's brick wall and had remained in the same place since the school, known as the Helen M. Stack Building, opened in 1936.

Fulton, 78, said he probably lost the wallet while cheering for the Baker High basketball team with a group of friends. Though a high school team, the Bulldogs played at the middle school gym back then.

Fulton said he returned to the gym in the 1960s to watch a basketball game. It's likely he was within a dozen or so feet from his old billfold that night. Both of his children attended the school, so they also must have come near it.

Fulton said the bicycle ID was needed because he delivered medicine for Rodamar Drug. He was surprised, however, that his student ID wasn't inside. He said he always kept it there.

But rather than focus on what was inside the wallet, Fulton said the recovery has led him to reflect on his life — one that took him to the Korean War and Berlin before a return to Baker City. He worked at Ellingson Lumber Company for 30 years, from March 1964 to April 1994.

Since his retirement, Fulton has enjoyed spending time with his 11-year-old black lab, Smokey. The two often hike the nearby mountains.

Trindle's knock on the door, wallet in hand, induced a slight ripple in his life, prompting him to consider times he hadn't thought about in many years. Fulton said he's "covered a lot of country" since 1946.

"Where did all the time go?" Fulton said with a deep sigh. "It's hard to believe that the times have gone so fast."