

The Pastor's Pen

How Do You Deal with Death?

The apostle Paul is a great model for how Christians should face death, as we saw in last Sunday's message from Philippians. He viewed death as *gain* (1:21), and said that, under his circumstances, death was his preferred outcome: *My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better* (1:23b). In the article below from his book on suffering, *How Long, O Lord?*, D.A. Carson challenges us to take a more realistic and biblical approach to preparing for death – the death of family members and friends, and our own. Note how he describes this as Christians being able to “die well”.

There was a time when Christians were known as people who knew how to die well. . . . But today, if I start talking about death, everyone becomes very nervous. Not long ago in my church, a woman I'll call Mary experienced a recurrence of cancer. Within a few months it had spread throughout her body, and despite treatment, she was very ill. The people in our church gathered for prayer. And although this is not a church from a charismatic tradition, the prayers throughout the day became more and more enthusiastic.

“Lord, you've said you will answer if two or three are in agreement. We have 287 in agreement, and we want you to heal her! We want you to show that you are still the Great Physician!”

Finally, it was my wife's turn to pray (she who had almost lost her life to cancer twice) and she prayed, “Heavenly Father, we would love it if you would heal Mary. But if it is not your will to heal her, teach her to die well. She is going to die anyway, and so if the time is now, teach her to die well. Give her a joy of the Lord. Give her a heritage of godly faith, with one foot firmly planted in heaven, so that her husband and children will be stamped by it and will look to Christ. We don't ask that she have an easy time, but ask that she be so full grace, people will see Christ in her.”

(Continued Inside)

Firs Focus

A Weekly Newsletter for the Family and Friends of Pickens First Baptist

- All Church Members.....Ministers
- Fred Stone (859-5853).....Senior Pastor
- Bryan Hester (704-4802).....Worship & Associate Pastor
- Jeff Rafferty (607-8306).....Discipleship & Missions Pastor
- Mike Sterlachini (395-5880).....Student & Family Pastor
- Jennifer Hendrix (449-5381).....Preschool Director
- Katie Freeman.....Financial Secretary
- Tricia McJunkin.....Church Secretary

Church Phone: 864-878-6564 Website: www.fbcpickens.org

Office Hours: 8:30 AM – 5 PM, Monday – Thursday

8:30 AM – 12:30 PM, Friday

The Pastor's Pen Continued

Well, you could have cut the air with a knife. No longer were there 287 people agreeing in prayer. My wife's prayer seemed to create a break in the chain. She was letting down her side. We found out afterward that some of Mary's relatives rather wished my wife would go to heaven first so she would know whereof she was praying!

A few months later, Mary's husband called me, and was desperate to talk. Mary's health was going down and down despite every treatment conceivable. The church was wonderful, bringing in food, reminding them, "We're praying for you . . . the Lord is faithful." But he wanted permission to talk about his wife's impending death. The heated atmosphere had made it impossible for them to talk in those terms, as if it would no longer be walking by faith. Mary couldn't focus on eternity or talk about it, because there were so many Christians around her telling her she was going to be healed.

Well-intentioned, but poorly informed brothers and sisters who try to deflect people from thinking about death, or who hold out the constant hope of healing, keep them so occupied with matters in this world that they have neither the time nor the energy to think about the next world. They succeed only in robbing their loved ones of the enormous comforts of the gospel as they step into eternity.

Whatever the church does, it should prepare its members to face death and meet God. You cannot live faithfully in this life unless you are ready for the next. . . .

In Psalm 90 we see that as Moses stares at death, he thinks through its relation to life, to sin, to God, and strives to understand what death means. And then he asks for wisdom to live his life in light of that death. He would have utterly scorned the modern mood that wants to live life as if death were not there waiting for us at the end. Moses wants us "to number our days," that is, to recognize the limit that is imposed on us, and to live with that limit in full view. Only in this way can we "gain a heart of wisdom."

Now let us suppose that your spouse comes home from a medical checkup with fearful news: there are signs that a vicious melanoma has taken hold. The hospital runs emergency tests during the next few days and the news comes back all bad: the prognosis is three months' survival at best, and all that modern medicine can do is mitigate the pain.

I do not want to minimize the staggering blow such news can administer to any family. There are many forms of practical comfort and support that thoughtful people can show. But it must be said that if you are a Christian who has thought about these things in advance, you will recognize that this sentence of death is no different in kind from what you and your spouse have lived under all your life; that you have been preparing for this day since your conversion; that you have already laid up treasure in heaven, and your heart is there.

We are all under sentence of death; we are all terminal cases. The only additional factor is that in this case the sentence, barring a miracle, will certainly be carried out sooner than you had anticipated.

I am not pretending that this bare truth is immensely comforting. Our comfort turns on other factors. But full acceptance of this truth can remove a fair bit of unnecessary shock and rebellion; for we will have escaped the modern Western mindset that refuses to look at death, to plan for death, to live in the light of death, to expect death.

For the believer, the time of death becomes far less daunting a factor when seen in the light of eternity. Although death remains an enemy, an outrage, a sign of judgment, a reminder of sin, and a formidable opponent, it is, from another perspective, the portal through which we pass to consummated life. We pass through death, and death dies. And the more a Christian lives in the consciousness of God's presence here, the easier it is to anticipate the unqualified delight that will be experienced in God's presence there.

PRESCHOOL NEWS From Jennifer



Nursery Workers Needed

Nursery Workers for 2021

We need your help! If you would like to volunteer on a rotation schedule to work with our preschoolers (birth through kindergarten) during the 10:30 a.m. service, please let me know. You may call or text me at 864-449-5381 or email me at jennifer@fbcpickens.org. All volunteers must have a background check completed through the church and have been a member of our church for at least 6 months.

Preschool Worship Volunteers, 10:30 a.m. Service

February 14: Amy Sargent, LeAnne Sargent, Brett & Lauren Garrison

February 21: Amy, Sophie, & Sadie Sawyer and Philip & Cheryl Aguero

Safety Team Rotation Assignment

The Month Of February

7th - Team B

14th - Team C

21th - Team D

28th - Team A

We have an opportunity to join David Platt and the Secret Church on April 23, 2021!

Beginning at 7 pm, David Platt will lead a virtual Bible study titled "The Great Imbalance." "Secret Church 21 is designed to be a ground-breaking journey through God's Word and around the world that leads to a tectonic shift in the way you view your life, your family, and God's design for the church. Your eyes will be open not only to a great imbalance that is affecting countless people for eternity, but also to the bold opportunity you have to change it with your time on this earth."

Tickets are \$10 which includes the live stream and the study book.

If you are interested in attending, please contact

Donivan Edwards: dedwards@swu.edu 864-650-1496 or

Judy Edwards: JudithEdwards@pickens.k12.sc.us 864-915-3351



Meals on Wheels

The Pickens area Meals on Wheels is in need of a few drivers for Tuesdays, and a few Wednesdays & Thursdays each month. Drivers can volunteer one day a month, or volunteer every week. Routes usually consist of 10 stops each and takes between an hour and 1 ½ hours. Couples can deliver meals together. Safety measures are in place regarding COVID. If interested, please contact Marsha Robertson at 864-855-3770.

Discipleship and Missions from Jeff

rightnow MEDIA

Missing the Bible Study and Fellowship of Sunday School?

Certainly, we pray that we will be able to get back to in-person Sunday School as soon as possible, but until then do not forget about the wonderful resource of RightNow Media that you have available. You can use one of the hundreds of bible studies for personal study, family bible study, or even in small groups. There are also conferences available, as well as youth and children's content. So, until we are able to meet again in-person, don't allow yourself to miss out on some wonderful bible teaching from leaders like Tony Evans, Francis Chan, Matt Chandler, and many others. If you do not already have access to RightNow Media, please simply e-mail Jeff@fbcpickens.org and we will be happy to send you an invitation to get started.

IN BRIEF

The family of Frances Riggins wishes to thank the church family for their prayers, cards, and food during this time of Mom's home going. She loved her church and especially her T.E.L. Sunday School class. Please keep us in your prayers.



Please Remember To Pray For Our Homebound

Please notify the church office if you or a family member would like to be added to our homebound or in-care facility lists.



Disaster Relief Training

There will be a **Disaster Relief** training session at Brushy Creek Baptist Church in Easley on April 17. Space will be limited so if you need your credentials updated, you might want to register early. This is about as close to home as DR training is going to get.

If you know anyone that is interested in becoming a volunteer please pass this on to them.

For more information go to the **SCBC** website at scbaptist.org for more information and to register.

Pickens First Baptist Church Schedule

Sunday, February 14

9:00 a.m. - 1st Worship Service

10:30 a.m. - 2nd Worship Service

FACTS & FIGURES

February 7, 2021

Building Fund: \$386,268.23

Offering - \$23,189.00

Offering to Date - \$107,045.00

Goal to Date - \$131,022.36

To Give Online:

1. Go to www.fbcpickens.org
2. Click on the "MyPFBC" Icon
3. Click on "Give"
4. Choose "Create an Account" or "Give Without A Login" and follow the directions

If you have any questions, you may call Katie in the church office at 878-6564.

Year-End Contribution Statements

If you have a MyPFBC account, your 2020 contribution statement is now available to view/print. To print your contribution statement, please do the following:

- Log-in to your account
- Select the *Giving History* tab
- Click the gray *PDF Tax Statement* button

Please call or email Katie if you have any questions or if you would like your statement mailed, emailed, or printed for pick-up. 878-6564 / katie@fbcpickens.org

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Welcome to Pickens First Baptist Church

February 14, 2021

Opening Song *It is Well*.....Bryan Hester

Opening Scripture

[Ephesians 2:8-9](#)

*For by **grace** you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Congregational Songs

*This Is Amazing Grace
Goodness of God*

Welcome and Prayer

Message In Song *Sometimes It Takes A Mountain*.....Andy Williams

Message From God's Word.....Pastor Fred Stone

Song Of Commitment

I Love You, Lord

Closing Prayer

9:00 a.m. - Lynn Fisher

10:30 a.m. - Brett Garrison

Closing Song

Worthy of Worship

Pickens First Baptist Church exists to be a Worshiping, Evangelizing, Learning, and Loving (W.E.L.L.) family of faith to the glory of God. (Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Cor. 10:31).

Online Worship Service Available

* On YouTube: On your smart TV, smartphone, iPad, or computer go to:

fbcpickens.org/youtube

* On Pickens FBC Website: On your smartphone, iPad, or computer,

go to: www.fbcpickens.org