

October 28th, 2018
"Peace in Death"
 Isaiah 57

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

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| Oct 21 Mark 14 | Oct 25 Luke 4-5 |
| Oct 22 Mark 15-16 | Oct 26 Luke 6-7 |
| Oct 23 Luke 1 | Oct 27 Luke 8-9 |
| Oct 24 Luke 2-3 | Oct 28 Luke 10-11 |

Lesson Introduction: Our passage this week highlights the contrast between the righteous and the wicked. We often view death as a scary event to be dreaded and feared. There are even times when we think of death as a sort of punishment, or a failure on God's part to uphold the righteous. As we study this week, we will spend much our time considering how death is actually a sweet gift from the Lord to His saints. The hope a Christian has in death should look strange to those who are lost, and speak loudly to the world of the peace that passes all understanding which belongs to the children of God. As we study this week, we will consider **the misunderstanding of Christian death, the peace found through Christian death, and the restlessness of the wicked in death.**

Key Memory Verses: Isaiah 57:1-2

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- **The death of a Christian leads to everlasting peace (V. 1-2).**
- **The peace gained through death is granted by the grace of the One who is high and lifted up (V. 14-19)**
- **There is no peace for the wicked (V. 20-21)**

Isaiah 57:1-2, 14-21 (ESV)

*1 The righteous man perishes,
 and no one lays it to heart;
 devout men are taken away,
 while no one understands.*

For the righteous man is taken away from calamity;

*2 he enters into peace;
 they rest in their beds
 who walk in their uprightness.*

14 *And it shall be said,
 "Build up, build up, prepare the way,*

remove every obstruction from my people's way."

*15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up,
 who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
 "I dwell in the high and holy place,
 and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit,
 to revive the spirit of the lowly,
 and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

*16 For I will not contend forever,
 nor will I always be angry;
 for the spirit would grow faint before me,
 and the breath of life that I made.*

*17 Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry,
 I struck him; I hid my face and was angry,
 but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart.*

*18 I have seen his ways, but I will heal him;
 I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his
 mourners,*

*19 creating the fruit of the lips.
 Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the Lord,
 "and I will heal him.*

*20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea;
 for it cannot be quiet,
 and its waters toss up mire and dirt.*

21 There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

Discussion Section 1: The Misunderstanding of Christian Death (V. 1)

-What does this verse tell us about the fate of even righteous men?

-What is meant by "**no one lays it to heart**" and "**no one understands**" in reference to the death of a righteous man?

-What are some misunderstandings we have about death?

Note: *This chapter begins with a clear statement about death. We learn immediately that death is something not only reserved for the wicked, but also for, "the righteous man." This is a result of the fall of man that is unavoidable, no matter how upright a person may be (Genesis 3:19, Ecclesiastes 9:2-3). Death is an inevitable thing that we all must face. While this truth is not*

surprising to many of us, there is perhaps some misunderstanding about the nature of death that we would do well to address and seek to understand.

Death is too often feared by those who are in Christ. Indeed, our passage today tells us when a righteous man dies, “**no one understands.**” We feel frustrated or perplexed at the idea of certain people dying suddenly, or we become angry when those we love are taken from us, asking questions like “why her?” or “what did he do to deserve death?” Or perhaps we fear death ourselves, believing that the sickness we have is a punishment from God, or feeling as if life here has more to offer than eternal life in heaven.

These attitudes demonstrate in us a misunderstanding about the deaths of faithful saints. This of course does not mean that we should not mourn the deaths of those we love. Mourning and grief are God-given feelings, and we see plainly in Scripture that there is a time and a place for such feelings to be expressed (**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**). However, as the people of God, although we grieve, we are told that our grieving should look different than that of the world (**1 Thessalonians 4:1-18**). Our thoughts about death should serve as contrast to those who are without Christ. We should not approach death fearfully, but with great hope and expectation. We will spend section 2 discussing why we should be so hopeful in death, and considering how such hope has been made available to us.

Discussion Section 2: The Peace Found Through Christian Death (V. 2, 14-19)

-What does the end of **V. 1** reveal as one of the benefits of death for the righteous?

-What does **V. 2** tell us about what awaits those who die walking in “**uprightness**”?

-What do **verses 14-19** reveal about how peace through death is attained?

Note: We see in God’s word that the death of His saints is a precious thing in His sight (**Psalms 116:15**). Because it is a precious thing in God’s eyes, it should also be precious to us. There are a number of reasons why this should be so, and **verses 1-2** give us two glorious reasons why we should celebrate when we experience the loss of a loved one (who is in Christ), and when we are nearing death ourselves.

First, we see that death is a precious gift to the righteous because in it, we are “**taken away from calamity.**” This world is full of the groanings of the fall (**Romans 8:18-21**). On this earth we experience natural disasters, sickness, suffering, crime, abuse, and a myriad of other difficulties. Our passage today reminds us that in death, the righteous are taken out of this mess that we are currently in and are taken to a place of pure peace. This is the second glorious reason we should celebrate when death is near, because we are not simply being removed from calamity, but we enter perfect peace. We are immediately in the presence of God, where peace abounds forever (**2 Corinthians 5:6-8**). Thus, when our loved ones die, or when we approach death, we do not move forward in fear or trepidation, but in rejoicing and anticipation! We have perfect peace awaiting us, free from all the chaos of this world, and free to worship our Maker purely! This should bring us great joy in the sorrow of death.

This joy-filled peace that awaits us is only available to the righteous because the “**One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy**” (**V. 15**) has made us righteous by His grace, through the death and resurrection of His son. **Verses 14-19** beautifully remind us that the righteous who die and go to live in peace are only able to do so because the Lord has healed them from their sins, restored them, and granted them peace. Yet again, the prophet Isaiah reminds us that it is only by the good grace of God that we receive salvation and are able to have peace in death.

Discussion Section 3: The Restlessness of the Wicked in Death (V. 20-21)

-What do these verses tell us about the fate of those who walk in wickedness?

-How should these two verses shape our daily lives?

Note: We have spent most of our lesson rejoicing over the peace that awaits those who are in Christ. On the other side of the spectrum is the fate of those who go their own way, which leads to “**no peace,**” and restless death (**Proverbs 14:12, Romans 6:23, Romans 8:13**). As we consider these sobering verses, may we daily strive to walk in uprightness, asking the Lord to grant us the righteousness that comes from Him (**Philippians 2:12-13**). And may we be a people who urgently spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost and dying world around us. What a privilege it is to be used by God to help rescue the wicked from restless death.