

## SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

**“The righteous perish, and no one takes it to heart; the devout are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.” (Is. 57:1, 2)**

Almost everyone knows of some godly person who died in the prime of life. Often they are uniquely gifted and are performing some special ministry. Sometimes they have even spent many years in preparation, only to die at what seems to be the most productive part of their lives. The words of Isaiah in this regard give us something to think about. He explains that sometimes the devout are taken away for a purpose. He admonishes us to “understand” that God may be taking the righteous away to spare them from evil. Those who walk uprightly are not to be pitied for they enter into peace and “find rest as they lie in death”.

Stephen, for example, was the first Christian martyr. As one of the “seven” he was full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3). When standing before the Sanhedrin his face was like the face of an angel (Acts 6:15). We also know that as he was about to die he was filled with the Holy Spirit and saw Jesus “standing” at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). We assume that his death played a key role in the conversion of a young man named Saul (Acts 7:58). Now we have something else to think about. Just what if God allowed Stephen to die to spare him from some future evil? What if his future contained something that would have jeopardized his eternal reward?

We need to remember that God is on our side. He is a loving Father and not an angry policeman. He knows our limits and will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able (1 Cor. 10:13). We are warned not to judge by appearances, but to make right judgements (Jn. 7:24). Job said it like this: “though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job. 13:15). That’s the kind of trust we need!

Jesus said: **“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” (Jn. 10:27 – 30).**

Here is something to think about. What if it is Passover time and the shepherd needs a sacrificial lamb? What if Jesus calls us to become that sacrificial lamb? Would we still willingly obey and trust Him? Jesus was led like a Lamb to the slaughter (Is. 53:7). Jesus was obedient unto death and God turned it into a great victory. Why shouldn’t we also be obedient unto death?

The Bible only mentions the deaths of two of the original 12 apostles (Judas – Matt. 27:5 and James – Acts 12:2). History, however indicates that all of them died as martyrs except John. Jesus did, however, predict the death of Peter. He said to him: to **“Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!” (Jn. 21:17 – 19).**

Quo Vadis is a historical novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz. In this novel Peter is fleeing from his rendezvous with death when Jesus appeared to him and said “quo vadis” (where are you going)? After this rebuke Peter went back to Rome and according to Eusebius and Jerome was crucified head downward. If Jesus told us that our manner of death that would glorify God, what would we do?

Solomon said that there is a time to be born and a time to die (Eccl. 3:2). Obviously, our time to die has not yet come. Near death experiences, yes! David once lamented that there was only a step between him and death (1 Sam. 20:3). The same could be said of us. Almost every time we drive on the highway a head on collision is only a step away.. While none of knows the exact time of our departure, we can still live each day as though it was our last. Neither do we know the day or the hour when Jesus will return. The certainty of our death and the certainty of His return, however, give to all of us the essential challenge to be ready for either. This is certainly, something to think about!