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The Guide to Learning Series

LEARNING TO FACE DEATH

Mayan Revelation Number 276

Monograph Six

Be Aware of God's Care

Believe in Immortality

Make the Most of the Present

Heed the Witness of Those Who Triumphed

Meet Death Gallantly

Share Your Faith in Eternal Life



ELOVED PERFECTOR:

We know that the hour of death is one none of us can escape. Yet we constantly are tempted to push from our minds all thoughts concerning death.

Some people refuse to seriously consider the meaning of either life or its physical termination until they have only a short time left on this earth. Then they become rebellious or fearful. This brings torture to themselves and to all who share their struggle - torture that they would have been spared if earlier they had come to grips with the question we are to consider in this Lesson.

Life is a great adventure, and death is part of it. When we live with enthusiasm, daily trusting God for guidance and strength, we are able to survive one crisis after another. Then when we become critically ill we know that even if we do not recover we still are in God's care.

This is the confidence you want to possess. This is the assurance you want to give to others who are facing death. Whether you are old or young - sick or well - endeavor to grasp the eternal truths that will enable you to face death triumphantly. Now, let us begin our Lesson with earnest prayer for insight and faith.

PRAYER

Dear Father, I thank Thee for the promise that life here is but the beginning of life everlasting. I thank Thee for sending Thy Son, Jesus Christ, to proclaim that many abiding places are prepared for our souls. Help me to so live that I will be worthy of immortality and have no fear of death. In the Master's name. Amen.



BE AWARE OF GOD'S CARE

Our ability to face death without fear stems from an awareness that God directs every aspect of our lives. When we look at the past, what do we learn from it?

From the day we are born God cares for us. Out of microscopic beginnings, He summons us into life. He fashions our bodies. He provides air for us to breathe and food for us to eat. He sets us in homes where we are sheltered and surrounded by human love.

He gives us senses in order for us to enjoy the beauty of earth and sky, of shapes and colors, and kindly faces. He gives us the ability to hear sublime

music - and gives some the power to create it. How thankful we should be that we can smell the fragrance of flowers and feel the touch of a loved one's hand!

God endows us with minds so we can comprehend His purposes for us, and so we can have a part in shaping the destiny of the world.

God gives us vision, so we can plan. And He gives us memory so we can have "roses in December."

Our Creator also endows us with the capacity to commune with Him. Men are able to speak with God and know His presence. Cattle dully accept the gifts of grass and water, but men and women can understand that Someone is providing for them, guiding and shielding them.

The more keenly you become aware of God's many provisions for your earthly life, the more confident you will be that He will still care for you after death. Think about the ways in which the Almighty has not only planned for all mankind, but has protected you personally. Recall the blessings He brought to you through your parents. Think of the times He guided you through perplexity. Count the occasions when He has brought you from sickness to health.

A recollection of past blessings led the Psalmist to declare: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (Psalm 23:6)

A keen awareness of God's love will enable you to face death without fear. There is no need to panic when you draw near to the door that opens into the unknown. All your days the Lord has been caring for you, sheltering and protecting you, supplying each one of your needs. You should have no fear that He will desert you now, or later.

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BELIEVE IN IMMORTALITY

When the sun sets and darkness settles over the earth are you disturbed by the thought, "I wonder if tomorrow the sun will rise?" When leaves fall, and frost and snow cover the earth, are you tormented by the question, "Will spring come again in April?" No, of course not! Such fears do not torment you, for you are confident that after the night there will be another day, and after the winter there will be another spring.

Trust the Creator one step further. Surely the One who used such great care to bring you into being has made provision that your personality will not be lost. To let a soul be snuffed out would be too great a waste!

We can rely on the One who brought us into the world, and who called us to think His thoughts after Him. He has greater joys prepared for us in Heaven than our finite minds can now comprehend.

Nature proclaims that nothing shall be lost; and justice seems possible only in connection with immortal life. Think of the beautiful child who meets an untimely death. Think of the man whose life has been one of sacrifice, and even

as he is pouring himself out for others, he breathes his last. Something within us cries out, "This can't be the end. There must be more." Life would seem just a broken arc if we did not believe that what we see and touch are but the house of the spirit.

Our final assurance is found in the words of the Master: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11:26). To BELIEVE in Christ requires more than lip service, of course. True BELIEF summons us to live by Christ's teachings.

It is a mistake to draw a firm line between mortality and immortality. The eternal life begins here and now. When we live on the higher levels we acquire characteristics that prepare us for life beyond the grave. Then we lose all fear of death.

So cast aside your doubts. Believe with Paul: "When this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." (I Corinthians 15:54).

But do not ignore the admonition that the great Apostle gave along with this proclamation of faith. "Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Paul is saying that belief in the immortal life should prompt us to use well the time allotted to us on this earth.

Cast aside your doubts.

Believe in immortality and you will lose all fear of death. You will also feel called to make good use of every single day.

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MAKE THE MOST OF THE PRESENT

We live in a society where numerous people are caught up in a frivolous and somewhat meaningless round of activity. They cram every moment with either work or diversion. They take little time to consider the needs of those beyond their small circle of special interest. They push from their minds any serious consideration of life's ultimate purpose. Then they flounder when illness strikes, and they tremble when Death comes stalking near.

The most tragic funeral I ever attended was for a young man who had wasted his life. The family gave way to uncontrollable grief. Friends choked up, for there was little they could say to give comfort. It is heartbreaking to witness the end of a life that has been squandered.

Those who minister to the sick and dying tell us that the people who are most terrified of death are those who feel they have neglected to make good use of life. One whose foremost desire has been for physical satisfactions naturally is unprepared for the hour when only the spirit is left.

A great preacher used to keep before him the words: "Preach as if in doubt that you will ever preach again."

Each of us might apply this conviction to ourselves, saying: "Live today as if it were your last day on earth."

Perhaps the best way to think of this earthly life is as a school for eternity. Study to know God here and now. He is everywhere in this world, as in the next. But the poor student is ill at ease in the Teacher's presence; while the one who carefully listens to the assignments, and follows directions, is not afraid to present the work which he has done.

The Master said: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matthew 6: 19, 21).

Daily increase your store of spiritual treasures. Then you will not be terrified to pass from earth to heaven.

Live fully. Do away with feverishness and hurry, but also eliminate from your life those things that are a waste. Doing so will give you more time and energy for worthwhile endeavors.

Seek for beauty, and add to the world's supply of it. Stretch your mind and push back your horizons. Love greatly and serve nobly. Make the most of the present and you will dispel fear of the future.

When Edwin Markham was eighty he declared: "I laugh and lift hands to the years ahead." Then he went on to explain that he meant he gladly anticipated whatever the coming years held in store for him - whether they were on this earth, or in the next. "The here and the there are but two parts of the whole of life," the poet said.

This point of view contributes to a vital, well-integrated personality. It puts purpose into daily living, and keeps one steady when battling adversity.

"THE HERE AND THE THERE ARE BUT TWO PARTS OF THE WHOLE OF LIFE."

Make this belief your own. It will give you stabilizers. You will not tremble for fear there is an accident around the corner, or that world calamity may descend upon you. If you become very ill you will not be tortured by fear. You will have confidence that "Underneath are the Everlasting Arms". You will be able to affirm: "Whether I recover, or whether I die, it will be quite all right." To your loved ones you can say, "Don't weep. Go on living as I would have you live. Someday we shall be together again."

A clear concept of the continuity of life here and hereafter puts purpose into your earthly days. It helps you to face death without fear.

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HEED THE WITNESS OF THOSE WHO TRIUMPHED

You will be strengthened as you look at the way men and women of faith have

faced both life and death. In the first century the followers of Jesus were so inspired by their Master that they became new men. Once they had been weak, and easily frightened. After the Resurrection their belief in immortality gave them courage to endure persecution and death without flinching.

When Paul was in prison, and execution seemed certain, he could still pray and sing. This was possible because he believed that, whatever happened, God would take care of him. Listen to his words: "I am sure that neither death, nor life, ... not anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38,39). Paul was SURE that death was not the end of the soul. He was confident that the grave could not hold the "spiritual body."

Stephen's face was radiant as he was being stoned. The way he and thousands of unnamed martyrs faced death with serenity was a powerful factor in causing the rapid spread of Christianity. The ruler who sent followers of Jesus into the jaws of hungry lions is reported to have exclaimed with amazement: "Oh, but these Christians know how to die!"

In an age when people are grasping for security, it is well to recall that many of the greatest thinkers of all time remind us that we need not fear the grave. We can face death calmly when we believe that God has in store for us greater joys than any we have known on this earth. Fear vanishes when we come to believe that although some of our pictures of heaven are hazy, of one thing we can be certain: God is there and He will care for each one of us.

Whittier wrote:

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air.
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

Carlyle called life "a little gleam of Time between two eternities."

Longfellow declared:

"Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul."

The witness by those who proclaim a firm belief in immortality and face death unafraid is not limited to men and women who can express their thoughts in eloquent or poetic form. Possibly you have known someone like the little lady I shall describe: She has never accomplished anything spectacular, but in count-

less quiet ways she has brought a blessing to many of the people who entered her door. She used to raise flowers, and during the summer and fall she would take bouquets to the sick. When she reached the age of seventy-five she found that this was too much for her strength. Then she said, "I will send 'spiritual bouquets'." She gathered quotations and clippings to mail with her words of cheer. At eighty-seven, when very frail and nearly blind, she told her friends, "God has been good to me. Every day I have felt His power supporting me. Now I'm ready to go where I can get more of that power." She had found joy on this earth, and was eager to claim whatever was waiting for her in the years ahead.

Death can be an hour of victory. Believe in immortality and your faith will prompt you to make the most of your earthly life and to face death with high hopes.

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MEET DEATH GALLANTLY

When you have surmounted all doubts concerning immortality, it should not be difficult to encounter death with a spirit of optimism. This need not be bravado. It will be based upon confidence that you are going to meet some who have gone on ahead, and that other loved ones will join you later.

Life brings a series of separations. As each occasion arises you can receive wisdom and strength to meet it bravely.

The time may come when a daughter marries, waves farewell, and goes to make her home in a distant city. There may be a day when a son departs for service in the armed forces. There may come a time when a friend who has been very close to you moves to a city so far away that you will seldom see him again.

Some people become melodramatic at such hours. They are shaken with emotion. They wear themselves out, and drain the reserves of all concerned. How much better to gallantly face the separation! This requires courage, but it is possible to be brave and calm when we believe that the bonds of love that bind one individual to another are not severed by physical distance.

Strive to maintain a serene spirit whenever you must part from family or friends. This will help you to establish a habit of composure that will steady you as you approach the separation called death.

As you are ready to take off from this planet you will want to present a noble appearance. Your body may be wasted, but let your spirit be collected. This will be an example and encouragement to those who know and love you.

Make death but another phase of your continuous growth.

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SHARE YOUR FAITH IN ETERNAL LIFE

There may come a time, Beloved Perfector, when you will have the opportu-

nity to help someone else to overcome a fear of death. If you have already struggled with the issues involved, and have reached deep convictions, you should have courage to speak words of assurance.

Your Instructor was quite young when such an opportunity first came. A friend had called to ask me to go to see his mother who was dying of pneumonia. The woman had never before been critically ill, and when she sensed that she would not recover, she was filled with fear. She did not know what she believed about eternity, and she wanted to talk to someone who had convictions.

I entered the dimly-lit sickroom and stood quietly by her bed.

"I am glad you came," she said feebly.

"Are you resting comfortably today?" I asked.

"I sleep most of the time," she replied. "They give me drugs, you know. When these wear off the pain comes. ... I'm not going to get better!"

As the woman spoke these words a look of panic came into her eyes. It was surprising that one who had regularly attended church did not feel that in her hour of need she could rely upon God, but I could see that she desperately needed faith. I searched for words to dispel her fear.

"You don't need to be afraid," I said. "Trust God to care for you. The Heavenly Father has given you a good life. Now He has unforeseen joys prepared for you."

"Do you really believe it?" she asked.

"Yes, I really believe it," I said softly as I took her hand, and earnestly prayed that she would lose all fear of death.

The woman made no further comment but looking up into my face, whispered pleadingly, "Please come again soon."

I stopped in the next day and found a trained nurse on duty. She told me that the patient was very weak, but urged me to come in, saying, "Mrs. M. has been asking for you."

I stepped to the bedside and saw that the sick woman was breathing heavily, and seemed in a partial coma. After waiting several minutes, I was about to leave when she opened her eyes and whispered, "I've been watching for you. Please pray with me."

Somehow I had felt this opportunity might come, so on the way to her home a prayer had been taking shape in my mind. This enabled me to speak without hesitation the words which brought her comfort, courage, and peace. The prayer was something like this:

"Dear Father, we are grateful for all Thou hast given us, but most of all for the promise that we can never drift beyond the reach of Thy love and care. Be very close to

Mrs. M._ in this hour. Ease her pain. Quiet her mind.
Dispel her doubts. Grant her Thy peace. In Jesus
name, Amen."

The next day the nurse said to me, "It was fortunate you came when you did. Mrs. M._ had been very restless. You helped her face death without fear. Your faith gave her the courage to trust God."

It seems wise to share this experience in some detail with the hope that it may guide you in a similar situation. The Lessons in this advanced Series are planned not only to help you solve personal problems, but to teach you how to assist others who are searching for Truth.



In conclusion:

Thoughts of death should not make us tremble and cringe. They can lay hold of us and tug us upward until we attain new spiritual heights. They can prompt us to look for the beauty and value in each fleeting moment. They can spur us to live nobly, that we may be worthy of the immortal life.

Don't avoid all consideration of death. Face up to the challenges that death presents.

Become increasingly aware that God has provided for your every need. Believe that He will always shelter and sustain you.

Don't allow busy-ness and diversions to crowd out those things that have eternal value.

Review the witness of those who were sure that death is not the end of life. Let their testimony give you confidence.

Trust God to take care of you today, tomorrow, and forever. This should enable you to meet death gallantly.

Share your faith in immortality.

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AFFIRMATION

I will so live that my soul will be worthy
of eternal life. Then I will face death
unafraid.

Blessings,

YOUR INSTRUCTOR.