A SHORT BIBLE STUDY

Facing Death with Hope

Hope That Holds · Book 2



Grief, heaven, and the promise of eternal life

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

Introduction

Every one of us will face death, first in the people we love and then for ourselves. Most of us would rather not think about it. But sooner or later the phone rings, or the doctor sits down, and the question cannot be avoided anymore.

I have led Bible studies, served as a lay pastor and preached. Grief is heavy even when you know where a loved one has gone, because the empty chair is still real. I wrote this book to give hurting believers plain Scripture to hold onto when death comes close. Christian hope does not erase sorrow, but it takes away the panic.

This book is for anyone who is grieving, anyone who is afraid of dying, and anyone who wants to know what happens next. The Bible does not give easy answers, but it gives real hope.

1 The question no one can avoid

The Bible is honest about death.

> *And inasmuch as it is appointed to men to die once, and after this judgment.*
> **Hebrews 9:27 (SLB)**

Death is not the end of a person. After it comes judgment, a meeting with God. That sounds frightening, and it should get our attention. But Jesus came so that the meeting does not have to be one we dread. He said, "the one who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does

not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24, SLB).

In project management we plan for every risk we can. Death is the one appointment no schedule can push back. Every person has to settle what comes after this life before the clock runs out.

2 Jesus at a graveside

When Jesus' friend Lazarus died, Jesus went to the family. Martha met Him on the road, hurting and a little upset that He had not come sooner. Jesus gave her a promise.

> *I am the resurrection and the life. The **one** believing in Me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone living and believing in Me will certainly never die. Do you believe this?*
> **John 11:25-26 (SLB)**

Then He went to the tomb, and the shortest verse in most English Bibles tells us what He did: "Jesus wept" (John 11:35, SLB). He knew He was about to raise Lazarus, and He still wept. Grief is not a lack of faith. The Son of God cried at a funeral.

"The LORD is near to the broken of heart, and the crushed of spirit He saves" (Psalm 34:18, SLB). If you are grieving, He is not standing far off. He is near.

3 Grieving with hope

Paul wrote to believers who had lost loved ones and were worried about them.

> *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve, just as also the rest who have no hope.*
>
> **1 Thessalonians 4:13 (SLB)**

Paul did not say, "Do not grieve." He said do not grieve without hope. There is "a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance" (Ecclesiastes 3:4, SLB). Tears are part of love.

What do you say to a friend whose parent just died? People ask me that question often. Most of the time the best answer is very little. Sit with them. Cry with them. Bring a meal. God is the "God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those in every affliction" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4, SLB). When they ask why God allowed it, it is all right to say, "I do not know, but I know He is good and He is here."

4 What happens when a believer dies

Jesus told the thief on the cross, "today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43, SLB). Not someday. Today. Paul said we are pleased "rather to be absent out of the body and to be at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8, SLB), and that "to depart and to be with Christ" is "very much better" (Philippians 1:23, SLB).

Believers often ask whether their loved ones are asleep in the ground or with the Lord right now. When I translated Paul's words for the SLB, the answer was plain: absent from the body, at home with

the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). God did not leave us guessing about the moment after a believer's last breath.

That is not the end of the story. When Christ comes for His church, "the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are living, who remain, will be caught away together with them" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, SLB). Our bodies will be raised and changed. Paul then says, "Therefore encourage one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18, SLB).

> *And when this corruptible puts on incorruption, and this mortal puts on immortality, then the word that has been written will come to pass: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, **is** your sting? Where, O Hades, **is** your victory?"*
>
> **1 Corinthians 15:54-55 (SLB)**

5 What heaven is like

Heaven is not floating on a cloud forever. Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for us (John 14:2, SLB). The risen Jesus had a real body that could be touched, and He ate with His disciples (Luke 24:39-43, SLB). The Bible ends with a new heaven and a new earth, a real place where God lives with His people.

> *Look, the tabernacle of God **is** with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them, their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will not be any longer, nor mourning nor crying nor pain will be any longer, because the first things passed away.*
>
> **Revelation 21:3-4 (SLB)**

The best thing about heaven is not the streets or the gates. It is that God is there. Every tear you have cried will be wiped away by His own hand.

The Bible is also honest that not everyone will be there. Jesus spoke of eternal punishment and eternal life (Matthew 25:46, SLB). That is why the next chapter matters more than anything else in this book.

6 What your salvation depends on

Whether you face death with hope depends on one thing: whether you belong to Jesus Christ. Not on how good your life was, how many people come to your funeral, or what you hope is true. On Him.

> *For God so loved the world, that He gave His Son, the only begotten, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*
>
> **John 3:16 (SLB)**

Christ "died for our sins" and "has been raised on the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, SLB). He went through death and came out the other side, and He offers to take you through it too. Salvation is not something you get after you die. You receive it here,

while you are alive. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13, SLB).

If you have never trusted Him, do not wait for a better time. Tell Him you know you have sinned. Tell Him you believe Jesus died for you and rose again. Ask Him to save you. Then you can say with David, "Even when I walk in a valley of deep darkness, I will not fear evil, for You are with me" (Psalm 23:4, SLB).

Facing Death with Hope

✦ ✦ ✦

Every one of us will face death. This book looks at Jesus at a graveside, how to grieve with hope, what happens when a believer dies, what heaven is like, and the one thing your hope depends on.

I am the resurrection and the life. The one believing in Me, even if he dies, will live.

John 11:25 (SLB)

Book 2 of 5 in the collection Hope That Holds

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