The attorney supplied a stock opening line to introduce our will: “Being of sound mind and knowing the uncertainty of this life, I make this Final Will and Testament.” The sentiment conveys less truth than the facts of living reveal. It might more appropriately read: “Being of sound mind and knowing the certainty of death, I make this Final Will and Testament.”

Generally speaking, death is a subject considered from a distance and framed euphemistically in terms such as “life’s uncertainty.” Christians, however, are given to consider death from another vantage point entirely. Dying is not an event to be put off until the end of life, but a reality to be reckoned with at the very beginning of following Jesus as his disciple. From that point, dying is carried into one’s daily life of faith with Christ until we are brought through death into life eternal.

Through baptism the believer is personally identified with the death of Jesus and with his resurrection from the dead. These are the events that afford, to all who believe in Jesus, the possibility of living a new life. What begins in identification with Jesus’ death on the cross in baptism continues in the Christian life by means of an ongoing dying — the death to sin. This ongoing commitment to giving up old ways of being is the death that must occur in each of us to make possible the rising to new life in Christ on a daily basis. Since we are united with him in his death to sin, we are united with him in his resurrection day by day. To be a Christian involves participating in that new life to such a degree that every believer, like Paul, can say: “I live, but it is not me, for Christ is my life. He is the living that is now underway in me.”

The best preparation for my death is daily dying. If a Christian lives their life dying to themselves daily, taking his or her leave from the world even while living in it, then part of the Christian’s living is in effect preparation for dying. When death comes, we can be ready for it — indeed more than ready, since Jesus taught his disciples that whoever lives and believes in him will never die John 11:26. Giving up on all the ways of the flesh and on all the enticements of the world, the believer is raised up in new life with Christ here and now, and through the accumulation of all one’s dying, the disciple anticipates with joyful hope rising from life by faith to life eternal!

The fruit of being a Christian is to be alive with the secret life of Christ within, even while in the world. Living by the power of the resurrection in the present time will surely destroy the fear of death, for one has already died on the inside and risen in Christ. What a gospel this is that proclaims a rising to new life, not only at the last day, but everyday!

> Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?  
> — 1 Corinthians 15:55 NIV

> Paul is ever near the cross in his own conflict with sin; in his bearing of sorrow, pain and humiliation when they come to him; in his bearing of the pains of others; in his increasing knowledge of what Calvary meant and means. But in all this he is discovering that the risen life of Jesus belongs to him, and with it great rejoicing.  
> — Michael Ramsey, The Resurrection of Christ
O Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end; Be Thou forever near me, my Master and my friend. I shall not fear the battle if Thou art by my side, Nor wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be my guide.

O let me feel Thee near me! The world is ever near; I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear; My foes are ever near me, around me and within; But Jesus, draw Thou nearer, and shield my soul from sin.

O let me hear Thee speaking in accents clear and still, Above the storm of passion, the murmurs of self-will. And speak to reassure me, to hasten or control; O speak and make me listen, thou guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, Thou hast promised to all who follow Thee That where Thou art in glory there shall Thy servant be. And Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end; O give me grace to follow, my Master and my friend.

**SPIRITUAL PRACTICES**

- Reflect on circumstances in your life that have made the reality of life’s fleeting nature known to you at a deeper level.
- Recall your baptism and revisit what was said and done at the time. Perhaps you would like to renew your baptismal commitment in some way.
- Find a way to celebrate and offer thanks to the Lord for your adoption into the family of God.
- Give time to reading and meditating in Romans 6-8.
- Think about heaven.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- How do you think and speak about death and dying?
- When in your life have you experienced the power of Jesus’ life at work in you?
- In what ways can you seek and welcome the Lord’s presence with you?
- Whose death in your family was the first to impact you personally? How old were you at the time?
- How do these events affect you still?

**A Prayer of Illumination:**

*Lord Jesus, may I walk with you in faith today, trusting that in my dying to sin, I am brought back to life with you. And when you come to call me out of this body of death into life eternal, may I be found ready. In your name, Jesus, who conquered death for good. Amen.*

**SUGGESTED SPIRITUAL FORMATION RESOURCES**

*Holy Living and Dying,* by Jeremy Taylor

*The Saints’ Everlasting Rest,* by Richard Baxter