

Don't Wait To Live

By Paul Jetter, Pastor, Upper Valley Community Church, Piqua, Ohio
www.uvcc.info



Gerald Ford and Saddam Hussein both died this past week. At first glance, they seem to have little in common. Ford, the peacemaker, was president of a democratic country for only a few years. Hussein, the tyrant, was an iron-fisted dictator for many years. Ford died of old age and was buried with honors. Hussein was hung and buried in shame. But they both now have something very much in common – they are both dead.

It is a sobering fact that all of us eventually die. Concerning death, the biblical writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes says, *"All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad."* Furthermore, whatever we accumulate in this world doesn't count in the next: *"Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand"* (Ecclesiastes 5:15). Saddam Hussein once had great palaces but died in poverty. Gerald Ford started life in poverty but found financial security. But both took exactly the same amount with them – zero!

The writer goes on to say, *"Death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart."* I think he is trying to get us to think. If we are all going to die someday, we ought to do a lot of living while we can.

Therefore, the Bible encourages us to *"make the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil"* (Ephesians 5:16). Because there are so many bad things that can happen, we are to seize our opportunities to do good as quickly as possible. Waiting often means never.

At the church I pastor, we encourage those who want to bring their coffee with them into the church services. Cups are often placed on the floor, and sometimes one gets spilled on the carpet. We have learned that if spilt coffee is blotted up immediately after the service it leaves no mark whatsoever. But sometimes the person who spills it is either too embarrassed or too busy to clean it up. The coffee dries into a yellow stain that sometimes becomes nearly impossible to remove.

In the same way, bitterness left to fester destroys and stains families for generations. Debt left unchecked leads not only to financial ruins; it often brings marital infighting and family insecurities. Addictions that are not dealt with destroy relationships and may even bring premature death. We are to grasp our opportunities because all around us is evil that wants to destroy us and our families.

As we start this New Year, it is a great time to remember that like Gerald Ford and Saddam Hussein we will all eventually face death. But instead of causing us to worry about how short life is, it should cause us to seize our opportunities before they are gone. The Bible tells us *"encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today"* (Hebrews 3:13). If we wait until tomorrow it may be too late.

There is a country song that says we ought to live like we are dying. In other words, we should not wait to bless others, to seek God, to forgive grudges, and to enjoy God's creation. Those who wait too long only have one thing in common – they eventually die and miss their God-given opportunities. So, what do you think God wants you to do? Why are you waiting?