

“My glioblastoma is going to kill me, and that's out of my control. I've discussed with many experts how I would die from it, and it's a terrible, terrible way to die. Being able to choose to go with dignity is less terrifying. I'm dying, but I'm choosing to suffer less, to put myself through less physical and emotional pain and my family as well.” Those are words from Brittany Maynard. She's the twenty nine year old woman living in Oregon who has decided to kill herself November 1st. She feels the urgency to end her life because she has a brain tumor that apparently will do it for her if she doesn't. The doctors speak of huge pain and suffering. Her way is to take a pill, lay in bed, and slowly drift off.

It's almost convincing. But did you hear her words? *“Less terrifying.”* She's terrified about death, this doctor assisted suicide is just trying to convince herself it's less terrifying. How terrified she feels causes extreme urgency. Being terrified with urgency means get out before the suffering and pain get too much. She's terrified because the reality of her death jumped. What was clearly a far off thing suddenly became a six month thing.

If only Brittany would relate to the Apostle Paul's situation. As he writes the letter we know as the second lesson he's facing his end. Just like Brittany doesn't face brain cancer by choice, Paul didn't face his end by choice. He was awaiting execution. Every moment if he let it, his mind probably would think about that moment. The pain, the suffering. Would he cry when the soldiers came to take him? Would he walk resolutely and willingly put his head down or would someone have to force it down? Paul's time for death had come, and Paul felt the urgency just like Brittany. Paul felt urgency and he wants you and me to as well. But he wants that urgency to be helpful for us, not hurtful. It's...

**Time to feel the urgency
You're being kept safe
You'll be delivered**

The time was right. Timing had always been right with God. ***“The time has come for my departure.”*** There's no hint of fear in Paul's words. There's an urgency, but not because he's scared of death. He's faced death before, probably even been closer. But through shipwrecks, beatings, and stoning God always kept him safe. Paul's urgency came from knowing that God had kept him safe during a lifetime of ministry putting Christ first and that by God's grace it was now drawing to a close. His life was a great blessing from God. ***“I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”*** Paul had done it. Like an athlete engaged in competition, Paul successfully made it through. He made it to the finish line and faced the last little bit with the same trust in God who had been with him so far keeping him safe.

From the moment we're born we're dying. Some seem closer, like Brittany whose brain cancer doctors gave her six months to live or Paul who was facing the executioner. The fear is in being sure that death could happen today. Even with all the things they both still hoped to accomplish, the sites to see, the life to live, death was right there. What if you got the diagnosis Brittany got? Would you be confident in saying God was keeping you safe? Would you still feel God's love? Remember it would include terrible suffering and pain. Would you opt to take control with a pill, wresting control away from God regarding the timing and safety of death? Does death feel urgent to you? Do you feel safe? Maybe you're hoping like most that death is years away. But what if death moved up, not to years or months, but today? Where would comfort come from then? In God's safety or a pill to end all suffering?

I don't want to die, but I really don't want to suffer. Death takes away any feelings of safety I convinced myself I had. God doesn't seem to be keeping me safe if I'm facing death immediately. My sinful thoughts, and yours, work overtime and lead to real fear. Death is scary and horrible. It's inconvenient and I'd rather not confront it. People think about things like doctor assisted suicide with a little pill because otherwise they feel totally powerless. That pill gives Brittany the illusion of control over death. If she chooses when to die, then she's seen as somehow winning. But that's not God keeping us safe till the end, that's sinfully deciding when the end will come. Death is consequence for sin. Trying to find some other safety from death alone, you'll lose. Sin cuts us off from God and the safety he provides.

So why could Paul, a sinner too, say that he had fought the good fight and kept the faith? Paul was a winner. You're a winner too. And that's not the power of positive thinking. You and I are winners fighting the good fight. When our end comes, how we fought and how we raced will be important. Every day we fight and race clothed in Christ's righteousness. We're declared righteous. Jesus completed the race perfectly in our place. He fought the good fight and called it finished. He was every bit of righteous that we should have been. We say with Paul, ***“Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord will award to me on that day and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”*** When our last moment comes we will have kept the faith. This isn't something you or Paul did. Keeping the faith means trusting in God. The truth we believe is that Jesus Christ lived and died in our place as our substitute. In God's eyes our sins are gone right now. We're seen as perfect right now.

Up until the moment a person stops breathing and their heart stops pumping they're alive. What great comfort for the Christian that in those moments, however painful they might be, God is keeping us safe. He does because of our Savior. That's what allows us to come through. Brittany Maynard faces the pain and suffering without the promises of God it seems. She faces them alone, and she feels urgency because she's losing. So she defies God and is choosing to end it. Sadly it would appear her moment of death will not be kind. Only believers in Christ know God is keeping them safe until the moment of death to bring them safely to the life to come. No matter how hard the fight, no matter what suffering, you'll be delivered by God in that moment to heaven.

Paul felt urgency because he faced a situation he wouldn't escape. There was urgency, but not to avoid but to embrace this moment. He looked forward to his death. Not with some weird fascination or with determination to escape it. Paul looked forward to what God promised him after death. He would triumph in death because of Christ. **"The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom."** Paul would be delivered soon.

During a medical crisis people go looking for ways to extend life. Every day we're hoping to avoid facing death as long as possible. Since death is scary, and we don't want to die, we figure more control is better. We might even get to Brittany Maynard's position where we want total control over our death because only then can we feel comfortable. But we fool ourselves into thinking we're delivering ourselves from anything. We think more of our life and forget God uses death to deliver. Tragedy or crisis aren't problems for us to solve independently. Sin in life isn't a little deal. Sin is the biggest deal. We're helpless against it and nothing makes us have a sense of urgency more.

Looking to the future, thinking of the words and promises of God, is an extreme exercise. It means looking past the pain and suffering to what's promised. It's letting the words and promises of God fill our hearts with courage, even to face death. Paul knew he possessed a crown of righteousness, just not fully. God would deliver him. And God will deliver you. Christ Jesus already faced death in your place. His death was under the punishment of your sins. He is the Savior you need, the one who can and will deliver you from an impossible situation. Through Christ God provides deliverance, a reward of grace earned by Christ and awarded to those who believe. Suffering, endurance, and proclamation of Christ, it's a life full of meaning in the final delivery God provides from this life.

Death then is an opportunity. A time to give witness and testimony to what we believe. Death isn't the end. Our peace is in Christ. People will ask as you face death. People will wonder why you can be so calm. Why you can face death with not afraid of the unknowns. That's God giving the opportunity to speak in love to others, with urgency. Talking about this with children, sharing with spouse, looking at friends and family and seeing these as people to speak with about God's love in Christ. Even in everyday life we give witness to the amazing power of God's deliverance. We can be confident in God's promises to us in Christ.

We've been kept safe in life through Christ and we'll be delivered in death through Christ too. That's the part Brittany Maynard is missing. She says, *"When my suffering becomes too great, I can say to all those I love, 'I love you; come be by my side, and come say goodbye as I pass into whatever's next.'"* Paul wants you to have urgency to speak about love with your loved ones. Call them close in the moment of your death and share Christ with them. Speak with love urgently, don't choose to end your life prematurely. There is something next. God wants us to have urgency about our lives because death is coming. But urgency still knows God keeps us safe here and he'll deliver us to heaven in his time. As we live in faith in Jesus urgency will speak with love.