

# David: Ending Well by— Heading Towards Home Psalm 23:6

David ended well because his whole life was built around heading towards his eternal home.

I would like to begin this evening where every verse in the Bible ends—with Jesus Christ.

God's Word ends with Jesus inviting us to join Him in Heaven.

*Revelation 22:20-21 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

His voice can be heard--from Creation, as He spoke all things into existence (Colossians 1)--to the end of Revelation, where He delivers back the Universe to God the Father (John 19)—because Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is the subject and the theme of the Bible, just as He said in John 5: 39.

*John 5:39 "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.*

Whenever you read God's Word always remember that the writers of the Bible were listening to the Spirit of Christ that was in them.

*1 Peter 1:11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*

So from cover to cover Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

*John 10:11-14 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. 14 "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*

Jacob confessed that the Lord was his Shepherd and that was his only hope as he died.

*Genesis 48:15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before whom my*

*fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, NASB*

David started as a boy singing about his Shepherd; he remembered that hope through all his hard days—and in the end he never took his eyes off from the home with Jesus he believed was his. So David followed his Shepherd through life and then as the night began to fall—he went home with Him to dwell in His House.

*Psalm 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.*

David began to follow Christ's voice early in life. Jesus said that His sheep recognize His voice.

*John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

Though he was but a youth, David pictures life as a long walk behind a Good Shepherd heading to spend the night with the shepherd, in His house, safe and secure.

Life is walking *behind the Shepherd*, the end of life is secured *by the Shepherd*, and eternity is spent *with the Shepherd*.

As we turn to Hebrews 11 this evening, we need to be sure that our life is pointed in the right direction and that we are truly heading towards our home. This is so beautifully explained in Hebrews and that is where we are going to read this evening.

*Hebrews 11: 1-16 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. 4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. 5 By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. 7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. 8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were*

*born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. NKJV*

This morning we saw from David's life that the way to die was looking forward to Heaven—that is also the best way to live.

## **How to Live: Looking Forward to Heaven**

*It is **appointed** ... to die once, but after this the judgment.*  
—Hebrews 9:27, emphasis added

None of us knows the exact date of our appointment with Jesus Christ to take us home to heaven, but we do know that what lies ahead is far superior to anything we could ever envision. Even now Jesus is preparing a mansion for us so that we can be with Him (John 14:2). What will it be like there?

Heaven will be a joyous and satisfying place! The joy of heaven's inhabitants is pictured by the scenes of praise in the book of Revelation, the white-robed conquerors waving palm branches (Revelation 7:9), and the guests at a wedding supper (Revelation 19:1–9). This is buttressed by the imagery of some of Jesus' parables where attaining heaven was compared to attending a banquet (Luke 14:15–24) or entering into the joy of one's Master (Matthew 25:21, 23).

From the perspective of life in this world, heaven is the object of human longing and the goal of human existence. The book of Hebrews employs the imagery of quest to express this reality: *"These all died in faith, not having received what was promised. ... For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland"* (see Hebrews 11:13–14).

In addition to being the goal of a quest, heaven is the reward for earthly toil, as in Paul's picture of himself as having *"finished the race"* and looking forward to *"the crown of righteousness"* (2 Timothy 4:7–8). We see this imagery again in Peter's vision of *"the chief Shepherd"* conferring *"the unfading crown of glory"* on those who have served faithfully (1 Peter 5:4). There is also the glorious picture of believers having come to *"Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God"* where thousands upon thousands of angels are in joyful assembly (Hebrews 12:22 NIV).

Images of satisfaction emerge from the pictures in Revelation of saints being guided by a divine Shepherd to springs of living water (Revelation 7:17), and having access to *"the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month"* (see

Revelation 22:2).

Heaven is also portrayed as a rest after labor: those who die in the Lord *rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them* (see Revelation 14:13). Similarly, “there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God,” which believers *strive to enter* (see Hebrews 4:9–11).

## **JESUS IS THE SON OF DAVID**

David came to this hope by trusting and following the Good Shepherd. One of the first things we notice when we open to the New Testament is that Matthew 1:1 opens with a reference to David our subject of study for these many months.

*Matthew 1:1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:*

The “Son of David” later (Matthew 1:21), named Jesus—is Christ's introduction in Matthew, which opens our New Testament. The parallels between David's life and the Son of David—Christ the Lord's life, are very striking.

We have often noted Christ's last words were David's (Psalm 31:5 and Luke 23:46).

*Luke 23:46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ ” Having said this, He breathed His last.*

*Psalm 31:5 Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.*

And that Son of David who came to die for us uses the words of David as He prepared to die in our place. At the end of his life David said in 2 Samuel 22:5-6:

*‘When the waves of death surrounded me, The floods of ungodliness made me afraid. 6 The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me.*

Those very words are what Christ Jesus used in the description of His pathway to death in our place.

*Matthew 26:38 Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”*

But, the lessons from Christ's death do not stop there. Many of us miss a wonderful insight the Gospels capture. We actually know the last song that Jesus is recorded as having sung in preparation for His death. If you ever want to learn how to face death in a practical way—note the content, the lyrics of the songs that Jesus used as He marched to the Cross.

## **WHAT DID JESUS SING AS HE FACED DEATH?**

First look at the Psalm songs mentioned in the Gospels by Matthew and Mark.

*Matthew 26:30 And when they had **sung a hymn**, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

*Mark 14:26 And when they had **sung a hymn**, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

This translates one Greek word which means, literally, "hymning." But since this was the Seder, we can know the hymn being sung must have been one of the Hallel or ("praise") Psalms recited at festivals, Psalms 113–118 or 136<sup>1</sup>.

Throughout the Last Supper Passover Seder, God's Word tells us that Jesus must have led the disciples in singing the seven Psalms (113-118 and 136) which the Jews of Christ's day called the Halell which in Hebrew means "Praise God".

Traditionally Psalms 113 and 114 were sung before the meal and the rest afterward. At different points of the Passover Feast these psalms were sung in sections; and at the very end there was sung *The Great Hallel*, which is Psalm 136. That was the hymn they sang before they went out to the Mount of Olives.

At Passover seven Psalms were sung in praise called the Halell. The fourth of the Hallel Psalms, or the middle of the seven (which is the place of importance in the Hebrew mind when listing seven items) is Psalm 116.

During the evening we know that they sang all seven. So one thing we know is, that they heard Jesus lead them in the middle one; the one that structurally is emphasized.

So instead of going through them all, we will just focus on that middle Psalm, the 116<sup>th</sup> Psalm.

Ending well, fearing no evil means that we die gracefully—and no one died more gracefully than Jesus. What makes this insight about preparing to die even more special is that Jesus Christ Himself sang and filled with ultimate meaning to His very own disciples. That makes these words and truths even more powerful to us.

This word for "singing" describing what Jesus and His disciples did as they headed out and began walking to Gethsemane--is the same word that Paul uses for singing from the depths of the jail in Philippi.

*Matthew 26:30 And when they had **sung a hymn**, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

*Acts 16:25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and **singing hymns** to*

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<sup>1</sup> *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications) 1996.

*God, and the prisoners were listening to them.*

*Hebrews 2:12 saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will **sing praise** to You."*

Jesus sang as he walked to the cross, Paul and Silas sang as they suffered for the cross and Hebrews 2:12 says that Christ is present as we sing celebrating His death for us on the cross.

## **DYING GRACEFULLY PSALM 116**

Now let's go to Psalm 116 and find that Christ is our Refuge even for Death.

As David sang of the Good Shepherd walking him through the Valley of Death's shadow in Psalm 23—so the Good Shepherd sang of God's power and grace as He also Himself headed to die the death of deaths as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

The first truth we can learn from what Jesus said and did that night is that the pains of death are **very personal**. It was only Jesus who couldn't sleep as He faced death—the disciples couldn't stay awake. So we also notice in Psalm 116 is that it is a very personal Psalm; the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun is used 37x and the Lord's Name 15x.

The second truth we find in Psalm 116 is that death is a time about which we must be **very intentional**. As David, and as Christ—we must intentionally choose to do and say what pleases God.

Eight times the Psalmist says "I will" in Psalm 116:1-19:

1. I love the Lord, because He has heard My voice and my supplications. 2 Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore ***I will call upon Him as long as I live***. 3 The pains of death surrounded me, And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. 4 Then I called upon the name of the Lord: "O Lord, I implore You, deliver my soul!" 5 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful. 6 The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me. 7 Return to your rest, O my soul, For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. 8 For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, And my feet from falling.
2. ***9 I will walk before the Lord In the land of the living***. 10 I believed, therefore I spoke, "I am greatly afflicted." 11 I said in my haste, "All men are liars." 12 What shall I render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me?
3. ***13 I will take up the cup of salvation, And***
4. ***call upon the name of the Lord***.
5. ***14 I will pay my vows to the Lord Now in the presence of all His people***. 15 Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His saints. 16 O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have loosed my bonds.
6. ***17 I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving,***

7. And ***will call upon the name of the Lord.***

8. 18 ***I will pay my vows to the Lord Now in the presence of all His people,***  
19 In the courts of the Lord's house, In the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord!

The 116<sup>th</sup> Psalm also reminds us of Christ's favor that lasts for a lifetime. Note that the past, present, and future are all covered by Christ's grace.

In the past he "prayed" (v.1, 4); and in the present he "loves" (v. 1); and in the future he "will call" (v.2).

Jesus also may have used Psalm 116:13 in the Last Supper Communion as He said in the words of this Psalm, "I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the Lord." The 3<sup>rd</sup> cup of the Passover meal may have been this cup.

We only drink the cup of salvation because Christ already drank the bitter cup for us taking my sin, my cross, my shame and rising again we bless His name as we drink the cup of blessing.

*1 Corinthians 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*

*John 18:11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"*

Finally, here are the lessons we can draw from the song Jesus sang as He headed towards death. These lessons are for us and can become such a precious source of preparation now and hope as that day draws near!

- ***We are not lonely at death if we always remember He hears us.*** Psalm 116:1 I love the Lord, because He has heard My voice and my supplications.
- ***We are not lonely at death if we pour out our fears and needs.*** Psalm 116:2 Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.
- ***We are not lonely at death if we always remember that troubles and sorrows are neither wrong nor avoidable.*** Psalm 116:3 The pains of death surrounded me, And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. Every great saint since the Garden of Eden (except two) have died in pain of one form or another. Jesus died most painfully. It is not wrong or sinful to have troubles and sorrows—it is normal and also a part of God's plan.
- ***We are not lonely at death if we seek the Lord's aid when life hurts.*** Psalm 116:4 Then I called upon the name of the Lord: "O Lord, I implore You, deliver my soul!"
- ***We are not lonely at death if we praise Him for His mercy and goodness that have followed us all through our life.*** Psalm 116:5-7 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful. 6 The Lord preserves the simple;

I was brought low, and He saved me. 7 Return to your rest, O my soul, For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

- ***We are not lonely at death if we make it a habit to walk with God each day we live.*** Psalm 116:8-10 For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, And my feet from falling. 9 I will walk before the Lord In the land of the living. 10 I believed, therefore I spoke, "I am greatly afflicted." The same One who walks through life with us keeps walking and takes us through the Valley of Death's shadows. And shadows of death are all we get—not death. Jesus said who ever lives and believes in Him will never die.
- ***We are not lonely at death if we drink from the cup of salvation.*** Psalm 116:12-13 What shall I render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me? 13 I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the Lord. Believers never die!
- ***We are not lonely at death if we seek to obey Him during life.*** Psalm 116:14 I will pay my vows to the Lord Now in the presence of all His people. Jesus said His sheep hear His voice, follow Him—and He gives them endless life, even when their body dies!
- ***We are not lonely at death if we serve Him in life.*** Psalm 116:15-16 Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His saints. 16 O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have loosed my bonds. Serving God is what saints are going to be doing forever!
- ***We are not lonely at death if we thank Him through life.*** Psalm 116:17-19 I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And will call upon the name of the Lord. 18 I will pay my vows to the Lord Now in the presence of all His people, 19 In the courts of the Lord's house, In the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord!

One last area we need to consider and that is the question—does all this work? The answer resounds through the centuries, yes! This is the best way to live and the best way to die, is what we saw in Hebrews 11.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR AS WE PREPARE TO GO HOME

*These all **died in faith**, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

—Hebrews 11:13, emphasis added

Remember the precious truth about the church at Smyrna—the saints who experienced martyrdom for Christ's sake in Revelation 2? Their faithfulness unto death was such a sweet-smelling savor unto God. Unless Christ returns soon, all of us face the inevitability of death. Are you ready? Have you planned for the testimony you'd like your funeral to be?

By a few simple preparations, you can really bless your family and friends who stay behind after you've gone home to be with Jesus. If you have never done this, I encourage you to take out a sheet of paper and label it: "My Home Going Celebration."



Write out a brief description of how you came to Christ, and of your hope in His salvation. Then share some of your favorite verses, songs, and hymns—and even a word to bless those you leave behind. Do this and, like Abel, you will “speak” even after you’ve died (Hebrews 11:4). To further prepare, consider once more the seven godly examples in Scripture of how to die with grace.

**Jacob looked for the Land of Promise to the end of his life.** When he was close to death, Jacob called Joseph to his side and said, *“Now if I have found favor in your sight, ... deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers ...”* (Genesis 47:29-30). When Jacob was a young man, God had promised that his people would someday have a Land of Promise, but Egypt was not that land. Jacob therefore asked to be laid to rest in the actual land God was giving to his descendants. He had followed his Shepherd all the way, and trusted his Redeemer to save him from his sins (Genesis 48:15-16). Have you thanked the Lord lately for His grace that is greater than all your sins?

**Joseph died pointing to the faithfulness of God.** He told his brethren, ... *“I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob”* (Genesis 50:24). In the ancient world, when someone was failing in health and was coming to the end of life, the family would gather around and listen to their last words. Inheritances were then divided up. Joseph died pointing his family to the Lord’s promises: “God will surely come to your aid, for He is faithful and will do what He said.”

**David died exhorting his family to follow God.** When he was about to die, David charged Solomon his son saying: *“I am about to go the way of all the earth,” he said. “So be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go”* (1 Kings 2:2-3, NIV). David earned the right to exhort his family spiritually because he had lived a godly life. Lot, however, did not. His family laughed and mocked him, saying that he was scoffing (Genesis 19:14). To make our last moments on earth really count, it is so important that we get ready to die by *first* living for Christ.

**Stephen died praising God.** While he was being stoned, he prayed, ... *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep* (Acts 7:59-60, NIV). What an incredible testimony of dying faith! Stephen was radiant, worshiping, and offering his spirit into the presence of the Lord!

**Peter died reminding the saints about the Word of God.** He said, *“I will always remind you of these things, even though you ... are firmly established in the truth you now have. ... It is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside ...”* (2 Peter 1:12-14, NIV). Jesus had told Peter that some day his hands would be stretched out, and he would be crucified (John 21:18). History tells us that he was crucified upside down because Peter had declared that he was not worthy to die like Jesus did.

**Paul died finishing the plan laid out for Him by God.** When death was near, he said, ... *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord ... will award to me on that day—and ... to all who have longed for his appearing"* (2 Timothy 4:6-8, NIV). Paul faithfully followed the course that God had laid out for him. His last days were spent in the maximum security Mamertine Prison in Rome. He did not protest or try to get out; he placidly sat there and wrote letters, knowing that he had faithfully completed what God asked him to do, and was prepared to go to heaven.

**Christ died pointing the way for another to come to God.** Jesus told one of the criminals being crucified, *"Today you will be with Me in Paradise"* (Luke 23:43). Is Jesus *your* hope? If you died today, would you be with Him in paradise? Are you ready to die?

As we ponder the direction of our life and seek to point it towards our home in Heaven—you might regretfully say, "I wish I could do that over and start my life pointed the right way sooner."

In Philippians 3:13-14, Paul said to forget what is behind and live for the Lord from today on.

*Philippians 3:13-14 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,<sup>14</sup> I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. NKJV*

If you have not been as faithful as you need to be, start *now*.

*Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*

Choose to like Paul (II Timothy 4:7-8) to finish the course Christ has laid out for you, and you will experience a great calm as you follow God's will daily. This is the very best approach to being ready to go "home" any day—and not just when your "to do" list is complete. Consistently living like this is a wonderful way to die!

Remember that David ended well by heading towards home—and so should we. Then we can echo the words of John as he closes God's Word when he says—

*Revelation 22:20-21 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!<sup>21</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

