

My Loved Ones:

God says in Psalm 23:4, "Yea, though I walk thorough the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: For Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

The person who can face the prospect of death realistically is able to live this life with purpose and confidence. How do you face the reality of your own death? Until we're ready to die, we're really not ready to live well.

Henry Lyte was a pastor in little churches in England. Throughout his life he was known as being a man frail in body, but strong in faith and spirit. His health was continually threatened by asthma and tuberculosis. Despite his physical frailties, he was a tireless worker in the ministry. In fact, it was he who coined the phrase: "It is better to wear out than to rust out." Wherever he ministered, he was greatly admired and loved by his people.

For the last twenty three years of his life, He pastored a poor parish church in Devonshire, England. His health became progressively worse so that he was forced to seek a warmer climate in Italy. For his last message before moving to Italy, he looked so ill, that many thought he would die standing in the pulpit that day. His final words, though, made a deep impression upon the people when he said that it was his desire to "induce you to prepare for the solemn hour which must come to all by a timely appreciation and dependence on the death fo Christ." On his way to Rome, Italy he went to be with the Lord at Nice, France, and was buried there in the English cemetery.

Pastor Lyte wrote a poem about a couple of weeks before his final sermon, which was shortly before his own home-going.

As we think of the Covid-19, various diseases, and the possibility of those we love succumbing to it, this hymn should give us comfort in times of sorrow, deep distress, and the prospect of death. It was said of Christians years ago: "They die well." How well do you face the reality of your death? This hymn helps us not fear death, but face its reality by trusting Jesus Christ.

The hymn speaks of "darkness deepens," "other helpers fail, and comforts flee," "joy grow dim," "change and decay in all around I see," but there is the answer to all of that. The answer is walking closely with the Lord. The hymn mentions: "I need Thy presence," "Help of the helpless," "O Thou Who changes not, Abide with me."

May the Lord help us today and the rest of our lives to walk closely with the Lord, so that He is right beside us. Since Jesus is in the boat with us, we can actually smile at the storm. May God really help us to face death well.

We love you and are praying for you today.