

**PREPARE
TO
MEET
YOUR GOD**

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**Scriptural Meditations for the Terminally
Ill and Their Caregivers**

Glenn A. Pearson

Genesis Press
Lincoln, Nebraska USA

Prepare To Meet Your God
Scriptural Meditations For The Terminally Ill And Their Caregivers
By: Glenn A. Pearson

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Genesis Press
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the glory of God, believing by faith that its contents will be a manifestation and fulfilling of 2 Corinthians 4:16, which reads; “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day.” To that end, this volume is also dedicated primarily to those for whom death draws near, with the prayer that they would not breathe their last unless and until they are fully *Prepared to Meet Their God* by calling upon Jesus for the gift of salvation and eternal life. This book is also dedicated to all family members and professional caregivers as a resource for their ministry of bringing comfort and a sure hope to the dying.

Expressions of Gratitude

I will always be grateful for my wife, Esther Ruth for her indispensable gifts of encouragement, editing, and proof-reading of the manuscript again and again. My thanks are also due to Pastor Rodney Lensch who has offered wise counsel along with many prayers for the writing, publishing, distribution, and spiritual nurture for all who read its contents. My gratitude is also expressed to Kelly Haack who has edited much of this work. I am appreciative to Genesis Press and their group, who introduced me to “Print on Demand.”

Foreword

As a longtime friend and colleague of Glenn Pearson, I strongly encouraged him to write this book because of his unique pastoral gifting and his rich experience in ministering to the sick and dying with divine wisdom and compassion. His credentials are impeccable.

As you will see, this book is a veritable seminar on how to face death in the faith and victory of Jesus Christ. Using Holy Scripture as his sure guide, Glenn deals with every conceivable challenge and aspect of walking through the valley of the shadow of death without fear.

At first glance, the title of this book could be misleading as if intended only for those on the threshold of death due to a terminal illness. However, its appeal is to a far larger audience for Scripture says, "Death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart," Ecclesiastes 7:2 NIV. Young and old, sick and well, believer and unbeliever can all benefit from reading this much-needed volume. Since none of us knows when our date with death will occur, it behooves us all to be ready at any time. Besides, we really aren't ready to live until we are ready to die. Having dealt with the death issue, we can fully and freely get on with life.

Pastors would be wise to consider giving this book to parishioners who are senior citizens. Sometimes it is assumed that longtime church members are ready to die, when in fact they are not. When asked if they are prepared to die, they may say, "I hope so", rather than "I know so". This book will gently but firmly expose a false or weak faith and help establish a true saving faith.

My prayer is that all who read this book will be arrested by the Holy Spirit and come away with the confidence Paul displayed when he wrote: "I know whom I have believed and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day," 2 Timothy 1:12^{NASB}.

Rodney G. Lensch,
Rod and Staff Ministries, Inc.
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Introduction

There is a sense in which all people of all ages are terminal regardless of whether they are vibrantly healthy, seriously ill or sick unto death. God's Word declares this sobering fact with these words, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day," 2 Corinthians 4:16. In these modern days, many people tend to consciously or unconsciously deny this truth with an ever-increasing zeal for good nutrition, a drive for physical fitness, a quest for state-of-the-art medical care, and a variety of radical "remedies" such as cosmetic surgeries, hair replacement and the like. Nevertheless, each of us is subject to diseases, deterioration of advanced age, accidents, acts of terrorism, natural disasters, and criminals striking deadly blows. Mortality creeps up on us, or suddenly and quite unexpectedly attacks us. What then are we to do? We need to carefully focus on the positive side of 2 Corinthians 4:16 which continues to say, "Yet, our inner nature is being renewed every day." The answer to our mortality is to believe God's good news that we are more than a physical body which is destined to return to dust. We are also endowed by our Creator with both a spirit and a soul, which He promises to renew every day right up to our last day!

The primary goal of *Prepare to Meet Your God* is a daily spiritual renewal for those who are facing imminent death. An Indiana cemetery has a tombstone, more than one hundred years old, with the following epitaph:

*Pause, stranger, when you pass me by:
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, so you will be.
So prepare for death and follow me.*

An unknown passerby scratched these additional words on the tombstone:

*To follow you I'm not content,
Until I know which way you went.¹*

The two-line postscript added to this epitaph makes a very wise statement. The not-so-subtle assumption is that there are only two ways we can go when we die—to Heaven or to Hell. This book will enable the dying to know with complete assurance that they can be destined for Heaven, and that the journey will commence immediately following their last breath. No one is fully prepared to die unless and until they become fully prepared to meet God before they die.

Using the Holy Bible as the primary authority for knowledge of the truth, the reader will then be led into personal

experiences based on this knowledge. The end result will be an adventuresome journey with Jesus Christ through the valleys of suffering, sorrow, and death, then finally into the House of the Lord, face to face with the Living God!

Here is an important word for those of you who have acquired this book and are not totally convinced that your illness is terminal. I am fully aware that some Christians have a strong faith that their God is a God of miracles, and that sometimes these are performed for those who are at the "eleventh hour" of their life. I fully agree that God is both able and sometimes willing to demonstrate His power and love in this manner. I also believe that if Jesus would say to you, "Rise, take up your bed and go home", after having read this book you will be prepared to "Meet Your God" whenever you reach the "finish line" of this earthly life.

The back cover of a book on the subject of life-threatening disease has a caption which reads, "What to Read While Seated in Eternity's Waiting Room."² Being confronted with terminal illness *does* place one in eternity's waiting room! While in this "room," the Bible and the book you are holding will inspire you to hear the voice of Jesus. He will speak to you about His everlasting love, forgiveness, hope, and the gift of eternal life. By reading the Scripture passages preceding each meditation, believing the truth they express, and praying the concluding prayers, Jesus

will be preparing you to die peacefully and confidently. Deep in your heart you will experience the full assurance of being prepared to meet your God.

The writings of this book are called meditations. To derive the most benefit from each message, it will be necessary to understand and practice the spiritual exercise of meditation as God ordained and set forth in the Scriptures. The content of all truly Christian meditation is the Word of God. Therefore, each meditation contained in this book is thoroughly grounded in the Holy Scriptures. The focus is always on the person of God the Father, His only Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Each meditation is designed to inspire the reader to be engaged by the Holy Spirit in a progressive moving from mental understanding to a dynamic experiencing of the reality of divine truth in the depths of the human heart.

Quite possibly, some persons reading this material will have varying degrees of limitation on their mental processes due to illness or advanced age. Such human frailties impose no limitations upon the Holy Spirit, who uses the Word of God to penetrate and generate within the depths of the soul a sweet mystical communion with our heavenly Father and Jesus our beautiful Savior. Godly meditation for this purpose is both God's *gift* and His *doing*. Trust Him. He will do it because His greatest desire is to experience the

deepening intimacy of your love for Him as well as for you to experience the depth and transforming power of His love for you!

Some patients might possibly be too weak or lack adequate coherence to read this book and profitably concentrate on its messages. In such cases, I ask that a spouse, a family member or professional caregiver such as a pastor, chaplain, attending nurse or hospice personnel read the meditations at a pace which their patient's condition allows him/her to beneficially receive.

The meditation topics in this book are in a sequential order. Therefore, it is *not* recommended that the reader scan the various titles listed in the table of contents and make preferential choices as to which topics sound most interesting or applicable. This could result in skipping over other vitally important meditations, all of which, are important to the overall impact intended.

Words For Family Members And Caregivers

It is not uncommon for those who are entering life's final days to lapse into a partial or fully comatose state. Should this condition occur, it is helpful to know that a person in a coma is still capable of hearing sounds and comprehending conversations held in his or her immediate surroundings. This is a medical fact proven in part by stud-

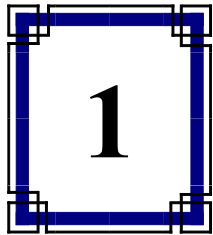
ies of non-terminally ill patients who, upon recovering from their comatose state, testified that they heard and understood much of what was spoken in their presence!

Therefore, it is advised that one or more members of the care-giving team read aloud from this book to those who are in a coma. Performing this service will be exercising faith and trusting in God to richly provide spiritual edification and comfort for the dying person. Our God is mighty and will perform all that His Word declares, including daily spiritual renewal up to and especially the final day!

It is also recommended that the patient listen to audio recordings of traditional Christian hymns or contemporary praise and worship songs as another source of spiritual inspiration and strength.

¹ Ron Rhodes, *The Undiscovered Country: Exploring the Wonder of Heaven and Afterlife*, (Eugene, Ore: Harvest House, 1960)

² Brunvoll and Seiler, *Life on Hold*, (Sisters, Ore: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001)



CONFRONTING OUR MORTALITY

– A REALITY CHECK –

Scripture:

Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor. Surely every man walks about like a shadow.

Psalm 39:4-6a

Meditation:

Unfortunately, many people the world over remain willfully ignorant, if not oblivious to portions of scripture such as the one quoted above. This is especially true during the youthful, healthful and successful seasons of life. Even during times of adversity and deteriorating health, it is highly uncommon for many individuals to contemplate or meditate on the status of their human *mortality*.

Suddenly, the *alarm* goes off. A wake-up call sounds loud and clear. But this *clock* is not equipped with a snooze button and its *shut-off switch* remains elusive. If it were a community tornado siren assaulting the ears with its wailing sounds, we would know exactly what to do: grab a flashlight, the battery powered radio and dash for the basement. However, the varied and repetitious alarms signaling our *mortality* are different! Your head physician has had the courage and professional expertise to give you the very news you may have been fearing. Using words similar to these, your doctor may have said: "Only the symptoms of your sickness are treatable; there is no known cure;" or "Your body has suffered irreparable damage from your injuries. Unfortunately, you most likely will not recover."

During the ensuing hours and days, the shock, the disbelief, and the anger, combined with a heaviness of mind and heart, will by God's grace comprise a *reality check*. This will be followed by the Lord's mercy, which will gently lead you to "teachable moments" to learn His Word, *His* perspective, *His* purposes, *His* plan. As you read on, the Holy Spirit will instruct you in God's truth, enabling you to accept your mortality and to be prepared to receive His *gift of immortality!*

Now comes the moment of truth. God is speaking to *you!* "Lord, make me to know my end and what is the measure of my days." To be strongly, yet lovingly confronted with the *brevity* of life is not bad, morbid or harsh. Why? Because God is re-focusing your life. He is about to give you a new perspective, a living hope. Listen carefully. God has more to say about human mortality. Please don't "turn Him off" because His truth is too hard to hear. The hard truth, the hurting truth in this situation is really the *healing truth!* So let it all penetrate your mind and sink deep into your soul.

His Word continues, "That I may know how frail I am." Surely the afflictions you are now bearing in your body dramatize this truth. "You have made my

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days as handbreadths.” This bold “read out” of God’s measuring rod of your longevity can be summed up in a single word: brief! “My age is nothing to You.” Here’s the message. The Lord has a way of swallowing up and dismissing all our temporal, chronological reckoning standards. He views all of life from His perspective of eternity. “Every man at his best

**Man at his
best state
is but a va-
por...which
all too
quickly
evaporates.**

state is but vapor.” We need to agree! Our temporary life in this earthly body is as vulnerable as “vapor,” which all too quickly *evaporates* with the heat of aging, failing health or the destructive wounds of accidental or criminal injuries. “Surely every man walks about like a shadow.” At sunset shadows disappear; so it is, at the sunset of this life. It is good, in God’s eyes, for us to

cease being shadows and be escorted by Him into the “Light of Life”. That Life is eternal life purchased for all who believe in the saving power of Christ’s death on the cross. By God’s grace, this book will prepare you to eventually walk into the shadow-less light of the Father of Lights, (James 1:17). Begin now to lift up your eyes “unto the hills from whence

your help comes,” (Psalm 121:1 **KJV**).

To know in the depths of your spirit and soul the brevity, the transience, the frailty, and the vulnerability of this life is to experience God’s goodness and mercy. If you receive it as such, you will be given a new measure of *dependency* upon His grace. Now is the time to release a *heart-cry* for His mercy. With humility, plead for the Holy Spirit to focus your eyes on Jesus who is ready to give you new hope and to usher you into the glorious future He has prepared for you. Yes, in one sense your earthly life is almost over. But in a much greater sense, it is just about to begin!

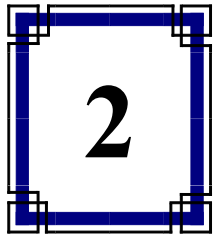
Prayer:

Oh Lord, my eternal God, Thank You for Your painful, yet gracious summons to face my mortality. Please help me to come face to face with You through Your Word and Your Holy Spirit. Fix my gaze upon Jesus and strengthen my hope, faith and love for You. In His Name. Amen.

I HAVE FOUND THAT
ENDURING PAIN,
WHETHER PHYSICAL,
EMOTIONAL OR SPIRITUAL,
MUST OFTEN BE
DONE IN SILENCE.
IT IS A LONELY VIGIL, BUT
ONE THAT THE SAVIOR
UNDERSTANDS AND
SHARES WITH YOU.

— **Judson Cornwall** —

From: *Dying With Grace*, pg. 65-66



PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD

Scripture:

Therefore thus will I do to you,
O Israel; because I will do this to
you, prepare to meet your God, O
Israel.

Amos 4:12

Meditation:

“Prepare to meet your God,”
that is what this book is all about.
Though we are created in the
image of God, possessing spirit
and soul as well as a mortal body,
death inevitably will come. When

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death does come or when Christ returns to earth, the first thing that will happen is that we will meet God face to face, one on one. What an ominous encounter that will be! What a dreadful experience awaits all who die unprepared to meet their God! What an *awesome* experience awaits those who are truly *prepared* to meet their God!

**“I have
faced termi-
nal illness...
this is a
special time
to confront
my fears...”**

Judson Cornwall, a mighty man of God, who, having served Him for 70 years as a preacher, teacher, counselor, and prolific author, was diagnosed with prostate cancer and given only three months to live. However, he lived with this death-sentence prognosis not just for three months, but for three years! He gave the following testimony: “I have faced terminal illness every day. Yet I’ve learned that this is a special time to confront my fears, challenge my doubts and trust my heavenly Father.”¹ This book, by God’s grace, and by the power of His Word and Holy Spirit, will help you do the same, regardless of the number of days, weeks or months remaining in your life.

When I was a lad growing up in rural Wisconsin,

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there was a county road with a particular type of road sign that, over the years, never faded, rusted, or tilted. Rather, it stood tall with its singular, direct, and powerful message, "Prepare to Meet Your God." Usually, I rode in the back seat of our family auto and liked to watch for this sign. As always, it would loom up and grab my attention. Without questioning the truth of it—after all, it was taken from the Bible—I did wonder what it meant to "meet" God and what one should do to be prepared for such a meeting. The sign always left me puzzled because I knew so little about "meeting" God and even less as to when, where, and why it might happen to me.

The book you are reading is intentionally designed to hold before you several times and in a variety of ways the same message: "Prepare to Meet Your God." You will be instructed in practical and specific ways how to be prepared. Most of the following meditations will focus your attention on certain scriptures, which deal directly with both the meaning of and the tasks necessary for an encounter with your loving Creator.

After your death, there will be no time or opportunity to make preparations. Now is the time to seek the Lord and learn from His Word about the

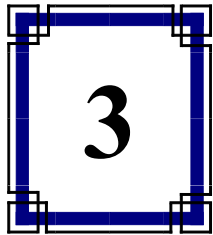
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care and counsel of your Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Be assured that Jesus will manifest His presence to you during the pain and afflictions of your circumstances and your physical condition. Through the grief and sorrow of bidding farewell to your family and other loved ones, God Himself will enable you to experience His supportive love. This love will be poured into your heart by the Holy Spirit in answer to your prayers and those of your loved ones. Also included in this care will be the team of medical professionals ministering to your medical needs. Dear friend, God is preparing to meet you right where you are and just as you are!

Prayer:

Father in Heaven, I thank and praise You for Your unconditional and unfailing love for me. Thank You for the knowledge that You desire to meet with me these days before I die. Help me, I pray, to humbly submit to making all the necessary preparations in my heart and soul to meet You face to face. Please remove all my fears, and kindly assist me to fully cooperate, and to make the most of Your divine encounters with me. In Jesus' Name. Amen.



THE MESSAGE OF THE BELLS

Scripture:

And upon its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, all around its hem, and bells of gold between them all around. And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy place before the Lord and when he comes out, that he may not die.

Exodus 28:33, 36

Meditation:

In the course of a life, different bells with many different messages register in our ears, our heart, our mind, and our memory. There are school bells, dinner bells, ship's bells, shore bells, cow bells, boxing bells, fire bells, storm bells, clock bells, and, of course, church bells. Each bell has its own message.

Before there were church bells, there were tabernacle and temple bells. These bells, as described in the scripture quoted above, were initially part of the Levitical priestly garments. The message of these vestment bells was twofold. First, the bells were intended to be a continual reminder to the priest who wore the holy garments that wherever he went he was in the Holy Presence of the Lord. Second, these bells gave a message to the worshipping community that the priest had entered into the holy place to make atonement for his sin and for their sin. Moreover, the bells assured the worshipers that the high priest had made it out safely, thus signifying that the sacrifice he offered was pleasing and acceptable to God.

Centuries later, church bells were elevated from priestly garments to high steeples and/or carillon towers. The purpose was to allow the bells to signal

the faithful to assemble in the sanctuary, much like the school bells ring out the message that recess is over and classes are about to resume. Church bells were also sounded in the hope that the clarion tones reverberating in a several-mile radius would summon folks with no church affiliation to be a part of the *community gathered for worship*.

Historically, cathedral and church bells were, and still are sounded in different ways on different occasions. Church bells are rung resoundingly on the Lord's Day and other days announcing times of worship. Church bells are rung joyfully on wedding days or at other times calling for celebration such as the victorious end to a war.

In the church of my childhood in rural Wisconsin, the huge and high steeple bell could be heard for miles. It was always joyfully rung at the climax of a New Year's Eve service of fellowship and worship. Several minutes before midnight, the old year was "rung out." At the precise twelve o'clock hour the New Year was "rung in."

Many church bells, and other large bells, are also equipped with a side-mounted lever-action clapper designed to generate a quite different sound known as the toll. The tolling of the church bell produces a

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somber, rather mournful sound. In this manner, it is used at the conclusion of a funeral or memorial service. The message of the church bell, when tolled has a very clear impact. Death is saddening, sorrowful, resolute, and final. Tolling church bells stir the emotions and command respect for the life and service of the deceased. I liken it to the impact and purpose of “taps” or a rifle salute at a military funeral.

This brings me to share a story from the life of the English poet and preacher John Donne [1572-1631]. He tells of the time of his illness, which led to his death. Donne’s home was in close proximity to a large cathedral with a high steeple equipped with a loud bell. He relates how again and again that cathedral bell tolled death after death. Though he had a deep respect for this traditional practice, the repetitious tolling eventually became an irritant to his soul. It was not so much the dissonance of the toll sound as the message it kept “pounding” home. Stated in his own words, “Now, this bell tolling softly for another, says to me, ‘Thou must die.’”

John Donne went on to tell about the common community response whenever cathedral or church bells were tolling: “I wonder for whom the bell

is tolling now?" This inquiry prompted the poet's very profound and oft-quoted response: "*Therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.*" ¹

I have chosen to call all who read the meditations of this book "my friends." So, my friend, are you receiving the message of the tolling bell? Will you allow your imagination and your memory to reverberate afresh until it really grips your soul? If so, let it do so while its message penetrates as deeply as necessary to quicken your mind and heart to hear with all sincerity God's vital Word to make "all things well with your soul." God is seeking to capture your respectful attention, like blasting cannons honoring the dead who heroically served their country in the armed forces.

**Church
bells stir
the emo-
tions and
command
respect for
the life.**

Your funeral or memorial service may or may not be held at a church with a steeple bell. In any case, tolling bells or none; know that your passing will sound a "bell-being-tolled message" to many. Your family, relatives, friends, and persons of the com-

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munity in, which you lived need the same sort of dramatic reminder of their own mortality that God has granted you.

Prayer:

Lord God of Heaven and earth, I need to know that You are the God of the living and the dead. I celebrate with thanksgiving all the *ringing* bells, which I have heard throughout my life. Help me now to hear and accept the real and symbolic *tolling* of the church bell, as closure to my life approaches. I have heard from your Word that there is going to be a wonderful wedding in Heaven between You Jesus, my Bridegroom, and me as a cherished member of Your corporate Bride. Inspire me to anticipate hearing the joyful *ringing* of those wedding bells. Help me during the remaining days of my life to be fully prepared to be wedded to You forever! In Your Holy Name, Jesus, I pray. Amen.

¹ John Donne, "Meditation XVII," *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (New York: Random House, Inc, 1952) Used by permission