

ARTICLE: My Life is in God's Hands.

God governs human life. We die when God has determined we will die. He gave life, and he can cause life on this earth to cease. Moses wrote, "*You turn men back to dust, saying, 'Return to dust, O sons of men'*" (Psalm 90:3).

From God's perspective on the governance of the world, nothing is left to chance. All the created world falls under the governance of God. Jesus said, "*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father*" (Matt. 10:29). In the same way, we die when God has determined we shall die. From the perspective of God's governance of the world, the length of human life is fixed. As Job observed, "*Man's days are determined; You have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed*" (Job 14:5). God has already determined the exact year, month, day, and second of the end of each individual's life.

However, from the perspective of human accountability, we can lengthen or shorten our days on earth. We do not know how long God has determined for our lives. The Fifth Commandment tells us to care for the bodies God has given us. The Lord promises long life in connection with obedience to the Fourth Commandment (Eph 6:3). He threatens to shorten life in connection with disobedience to the Fourth Commandment. "*The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures*" (Prov. 30:17). Er and Onan shortened their lives by their sins (Gen. 38:7, 10). Absalom shortened his life by rebelling against his father (2 Sam. 18:14, 15). On the other hand, God granted Hezekiah 15 additional years to his life in answer to prayer (2 Kings 20:5-6). Paul urged the sailors on board his ship to eat food lest they die (Ac 27:33-34).

Thus we take comfort from the fact that God determines how long we live. If I were getting ready to board an aeroplane and someone told me a psychic had predicted that the plane would crash, my reply would be, "My times are in God's hands." On the other hand, if I were getting ready to board the plane and noticed that oil was leaking from the engines, that one of the wings had a crack, and that the pilot was drunk, I would not get on that plane. God gave us common sense to know when we may be putting our lives in danger.

Death frightens us (Heb. 2:15). Yet God has given us hope and encouragement. As Paul wrote, "*Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 15:54-57). It is through faith in Christ, who conquered death for us, that we may face it with courage and conviction. Death, for a believer, is, in the final analysis, a deliverance from the troubles of this life. As Paul wrote when he anticipated his death, "*The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom*" (2 Tim. 4:18).