



## How Ready Are We For Death?

A colleague friend of mine shared with me his experience flying to Hawaii for a vacation. Shortly after refueling in Salt Lake City, Utah, the captain announced that he was turning the plane back. One of the engines had stopped working and they needed to make an “emergency landing”.

In the minutes that followed there were additional announcements preparing the crew and passengers for what might be next. One of the announcements explained why they needed to brace themselves for what the captain described as a “hard landing”. My friend reported how this news caused the woman next to him to vomit.

Such an extreme physical reaction is not entirely surprising given the stress of the situation. We imagine what might have been going through the woman’s mind, “Is this it? Is this plane going to crash? Am I going to die in a few minutes?”

For many of us, the prospect of imminent death is not on our radar (no pun intended). But the plane you’re flying on loses an engine and that changes one’s perspective in a hurry. The prospect of your impending demise surely evokes a variety of responses....You think of loved ones....Things you regret, things you left undone, surface in your mind....You deliberate over your contingency plans....You panic....You puke....You pray.

I can’t help but think that a person’s worldview will profoundly impact how you respond in such a situation. For some, death is the great enemy and the worst thing that could happen to a person. For others, death is the defeated enemy (see 1Corinthians 15:26, 55)—death is the transition point between this existence and the next. Convinced of this, the apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, “Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain” (1Corinthians 15:58).

As my colleague detailed his experience to me, I’m imagining him unmoved by the situation—not because he is naive, or reckless, but because he believes that death is not the ultimate end.

I think also of St. Francis of Assisi who was working in his garden when he was approached by a friend and asked what he would be doing if he knew this would be the last hour of his life. Without missing a beat, Francis answered, “I would finish my gardening.”

That response inspires me.

My colleague’s composure similarly impresses me.

I want that. I want to live in such a way as to not be startled by the prospect of death. To put it more crudely, I don't want to be the person on the plane who is puking when an engine fails. I want to be the person praying—I want to be the one giving thanks for the life I've had, and for the life I will eternally enjoy in the presence of Christ my Saviour.