

As hormones begin affecting many young men, they begin to brag, boast and show off. Sometimes that is great fun to watch, and the competitions can get exciting. But sometimes, it can be horrendous, as their confidence turns into recklessness and stupidity. eg Think of the young men who show off while rock climbing, and try to do some of the stunts done by professionals or with trick photography. Driven by pride and hormones, they can easily overstep the safety mark, and tragedy can happen.

But they do not think of that. They are strong, they are capable, they are mature enough to climb, and they are young... Death is years off. Life is too great now. Nothing will happen... they will not die!

For most of us, we do not know how close to death we often come. A friend of mine was at a barbecue. He had taken his migraine medication, and felt better, so ate a sausage. The sausage stuck in his throat, and he could not shift it, because the medication affected his muscles. His oesophagus or food pipe ripped, and he almost died. It took months to recover.

We do not know how close we come to death but often we live as if we will never die. That is not simply a modern thought. It has been around from the start of mankind. It was there in the garden in Genesis 3. When being tempted to pick and eat the fruit, the serpent says to Eve *"You will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you'll be like God, knowing good and evil."* Since that time, many people have lived as if they would not die.

But we expect others will die. We see people age and eventually die, yet we often get surprised to see just how much we have aged.

One 28 year old woman I spoke with really wanted someone to ask her to show her proof of age card again, because then she would feel as if she was about 18 again.

For others of us, we are faced with grey hairs, or

balding heads, or wrinkles or lack of muscle tone or creaking joints or orthodontists.

We have to face the fact that our bodies do wear out. Some time, way ahead in the future, we will not be here. And as that idea grabs home with our more frequent attendance at funerals, or with less friends at reunions etc, we start to wonder about what happens next.

One person I spoke with at a university some years ago was very down to earth. He said "When I die, I'll become fertilizer. I stop existing and my body can make a tree grow. That's it! I will perish."

Psalm 49 looks at the reality of the end of life. Verses 10-12 say *"For all can see that wise men die; the foolish and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others. Their tombs will remain their houses forever, their dwellings for endless generations, though they had named lands after themselves. But man, despite his riches, does not endure; he is like the beasts that perish."* Most people do not like being that cold and hard.

We want something more. The most popular beliefs are another life on earth of some type, or a heaven-like experience.

The idea of a hell, or a non-existence does not appeal to many people. They choose not to believe it, because it is so hard to contemplate. They prefer the 1970's song which included "I swear there ain't no heaven, but I pray there ain't no hell." That song does not accept Christian beliefs, but has a form of reincarnation of a child being born when he dies.

His proof? He sings "Only my dying will tell." And like that song, many people are content to wait until they die before they make any serious choice about the after life. Their attitude says "Why bother now? We might choose the wrong one and miss out on the better things in life." The author of Psalm 49 did not want to perish without hope. He said in verse 14-15 *"Like sheep they are destined for the grave, and death will*

## John 3:16

### Part 4

### Will Not Perish

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*feed on them. The upright will rule over them in the morning; their forms will decay in the grave, far from their princely mansions. But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself."*

In line with that, John 3:16 makes a promise that Christians will not perish. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish..."* God guarantees that if we trust in Jesus, we will not perish.

But what does that mean? Does that mean that we will not die? Does it mean that we will not be left to rot in the grave? Does it mean avoid a place like hell? What did the apostle John mean? The word "to perish" is used three more times in John's Gospel in ways that help us find out what he understood by it.

In 6:27 it says *"Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."* Perish here means to 'spoil and not last the distance, and is the opposite of lasting to eternal life.

In 10:28, Jesus says he gives his people eternal life, they will not perish. In 11: 50, the High Priest says it is better for one man to die than that the whole nation should perish, meaning that the whole nation be destroyed at the hands of the Roman army.

Some people may want to say that the apostle John does not have a very developed doctrine of hell. He appears much more swung to the idea of non-existence, compared to having life that goes on forever.

However, I prefer to see that John wrote his gospel in a more gentle way than some caricatures of hell-fire preachers. He still presents two alternatives. One is to perish and miss out on the joys of eternal life in the Lord's house in heaven. The other is to live forever with our Lord. That does not mean that John

does not believe in hell. He is the author of the Book of Revelation, in which we have some extremely graphic descriptions of what perishing means, as well as extremely graphic descriptions of eternal life with God.

However, what John 3:16 says is that if you believe in Jesus, your resting place will not be fertilizing the soil, nor going off with a flash, nor missing out. Instead, you will have eternal life, which we will look at in more detail next week.

Do not miss out... believe in Jesus, and he will keep you from perishing.