

FACING DEATH:

O Thou Eternal One, we who are doomed to die lift up our souls to thee for strength. The death of others has touched us, and we know that at some turn of our pathway he stands waiting to take us by the hand and lead us— we know not whither. We praise thee that to us death is no longer an enemy, but thy great angel and our friend, who alone can open for us the prison-house of pain and misery and set our feet in the roomy spaces of a larger life. Yet we are but children, afraid of the dark and the unknown, and we dread the parting from the life that is so sweet and from the loved ones who are so dear.

Grant us a valiant heart, that we may tread the road with head uplifted and a smiling face. May we do our work to the last with a wholesome joy, and love our loved ones with an added tenderness because the days of love are short. On thee we cast the heaviest burden that numbs our soul— the gnawing fear for those we love, whom we would leave unsheltered in a selfish world. But we will trust in thee, for through all our years thou hast been our stay. O thou Father of the fatherless, put your arm about our little ones. We bless thee for every hour of life, for all our share in the joys and strivings of our brothers and sisters, for the wisdom gained which will be part of us forever. If soon we must go, still we know that through thee we have lived, and pray that by thy grace we have helped to shape the future and bring in the better day. If our spirit droops in loneliness, uphold us by thy companionship. When all the voices of love grow faint and drift away, thy everlasting arms will still be there. Thou art the Father of our spirits; from thee we have come; to thee we go. We rejoice that in the hours of our purer vision, we know that for those who abide in thee, death is but the gateway to life eternal. Into thy hands we commend our spirit. Amen.

~Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), *Prayers of the Social Awakening* (1910)