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A Time to Keep: Theology, Mortality, and the Shape of a Human Life

Ephraim Radner

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The miracle of birth and the mystery of death mark human life. Mortality, like a dark specter, looms over all that lies in between. Human character, behavior, aims, and community are all inescapably shaped by this certainty of human ends. Mortality, like an unwanted guest, intrudes, becoming a burden and a constant struggle. Mortality, like a thief who steals, even threatens the ability to live life rightly. Life is short. Death is certain. Mortality, at all costs, should be resisted or transcended.

In *A Time to Keep* Ephraim Radner revalues mortality, reclaiming it as God's own. Mortality should not be resisted but received. Radner reveals mortality's true nature as a gift, God's gift, and thus reveals that the many limitations that mortality imposes should be celebrated. Radner demonstrates how faithfulness—and not resignation, escape, denial, redefinition, or excess—is the proper response to the gift of humanity's temporal limitation. To live rightly is to recognize and then willingly accept life's limitations.

In chapters on sex and sexuality, singleness and family, education and vocation, and a panoply of end of life issues, *A Time to Keep* plumbs the depths of the secular imagination, uncovering the constant struggle with human finitude in its myriad forms. Radner shows that by wrongly positioning creaturely mortality, these parts of human experience have received an inadequate reckoning. *A Time to Keep* retrieves the most basic confession of the Christian faith, that life is God's, which Radner offers as grace, as the basis for a Christian understanding of human existence bound by its origin and telos. The possibility and purpose of what comes between birth and death is ordered by the pattern of Scripture, but is performed faithfully only in obedience to the limits that bind it.

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