By Willa Perrier

from A 2nd Helping of Chicken Soup for the Soul

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***Oh, the worst of all tragedies is not to die young,***

***but to live until I am seventy-five and yet not ever truly to have lived.***

Martin Luther King Jr.

**From 1929 to 1968 is only 39 short years**.

* + Too short to gather the fruits of your labor
  + Too short to comfort your parents when your brother drowns
  + Too short to comfort your father when mother dies
  + Too short to see your children finish school
  + Too short to ever enjoy grandchildren
  + Too short to know retirement
  + Thirty-nine years is just too short.

**From 1929 to 1968 is only 39 short years, yet; it’s**

* + Too long to be crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination
  + Too long to stand in the quicksand of racial injustices,
  + Too long to receive threatening phone calls, it's
  + Too long to live under the sweltering heat of continuous pressure
  + Too long, 39 years is just too long.

**From 1929 to 1968 is only 39 short years, yet it's long enough.**

It's long enough to journey all the way to India to learn under a great teacher how to walk through angry crowds and keep cool.

* + It's long enough to be chased by police dogs and lashed by the rushing waters from the fireman's hoses because you are dramatizing the fact that justice has a way of eluding me and my brother.
  + It's long enough to spend many days in jail while protesting the plight of others.
  + It's long enough to have a bomb thrown into your home.
  + It's long enough to teach angry men to be still while you pray for the bombers.
  + It's long enough.
  + It's long enough to lead many men to Christianity.
  + It's long enough to know it's better to go to war for justice than to live in peace with injustices.
  + It's long enough to know that more appalling than bigotry and hatred are those who sit still and watch injustices each day in silence.
  + It's long enough to realize that injustices are undiscriminating and people of all races and creeds experience its cruel captivity sooner or later.
* **It's long enough**.
* It's long enough to know that when one uses civil disobedience for his civil rights, he does not break the laws of the Constitution of the United States of America -rather he seeks to uphold the principles all men are created equal; he seeks to break down local ordinances that have already broken the laws of the Constitution of the United States.
* It's long enough to accept invitations to speak to the nation's leaders.
* It's long enough to address thousands of people on hundreds of different occasions.
* It's long enough to lead 200,000 people to the nation's capital to dramatize that all of America's people are heirs to the property of rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.
* It's long enough to enter college at 15.
* It's long enough to finish and earn several degrees.
* It's long enough to earn hundreds of awards.
* It's long enough to marry and father four children.
* It's long enough to become a drum major for peace.
* It's long enough to earn a Nobel Peace Prize.
* It's long enough to give the $54,000 prize money to the cause of justice.

It's long enough to visit the mountain top. It's certainly long enough to have a dream. When we note how much Martin Luther King packed into 39 short years, we know it's long enough for any man who loves his country and his fellow man so much that life itself has no value - unless all men can sit at the table of brotherhood as brothers. Thirty-nine years is long enough for any man to knowingly flirt with death each day of his life - because to spare himself heartaches and sorrow meant two steps backward for his brother tomorrow. Martin lived for several centuries, all rolled into 39 short years. His memory will live forever. How wonderful it would be if we could all live as well.

Martin, like all others, would have welcomed longevity - yet when he weighed the facts, he said, "It's not how long a man lives, but how well he uses the time allotted him."

And so we salute and honor the memory of a man who lived in the confusion of injustice for all his too short, too long, long enough 39 years-

"For He's Free At Last."