

ARE YOU AFRAID TO DIE?

by Don Fortner

The fear of death is naturally common to all men. And the natural, unregenerate man has great reason to be afraid. "It is appointed unto men once to die. and after this the judgment" (Heb. 2:15). Because of your sin and guilt before God, you must die. But death will not end your existence. You will stand before a holy, just, and righteous God in judgment. And you will reap the exact penalty due your sin: the infinite, eternal wrath of God in hell!

For the believer, however, things are far different. Our text tells us that THE LORD JESUS CHRIST CAME INTO THIS WORLD FOR THIS PURPOSE, THAT HE MIGHT "DELIVER THEM WHO THROUGH FEAR OF DEATH WERE ALL THEIR LIFETIME SUBJECT TO BONDAGE." You and I, who are washed in the blood of Christ and living by faith in Him, should have no fear of death. If you are a believer yet struggling with this tormenting fear, let me offer some helpful suggestions:

1. LOOK TO CHRIST. There is no deliverance from the fear of death except by looking to Him whose death is the death of death. Our Lord has done many things to deliver us from this fear of death and its bondage. HE HAS DESTROYED THE POWER OF DEATH BY DYING IN OUR PLACE AND RISING AGAIN. Since all of God's elect were partakers of flesh and blood, under the dominion of death, Christ became a man to suffer and die for us. It was not possible for our Representative to satisfy the claims of Divine justice against us unless He lived and died in our nature. By His substitutionary death on the cursed tree and His triumphant resurrection, the Son of God destroyed the power of Satan and the power of the grave over us. Why then should we fear death?

OUR LORD ALSO DELIVERS US FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH BY REMOVING OUR SIN. "The sting of death is sin." It is sin which causes men torment in death. But in Christ we have no sin. In Him we are fully forgiven. By His blood our sins are washed away. Be sure, my friend, that you have the forgiveness of sin by faith in Christ, and fear death no longer. To die forgiven, "accepted in the Beloved," is not really to die at all. It is simply the departure out of this world into the Father's house.

For another thing, the law held us in bondage to the sentence of death and condemnation; but "CHRIST HATH REDEEMED US FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW." "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." He is the end of the law's power to condemn. In the book of God's holy law there is no legal claim of condemnation upon any believer! Christ satisfied that claim for us! Why then should we fear?

Moreover, CHRIST DELIVERS US FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH BY CHANGING THE CHARACTER OF DEATH. Believers do not die in the sense that others do. To the ungodly, death is the penalty of sin; but to the believer it is just a change of location. Death to the wicked is the execution of

justice, but to the believer it is a deliverance from sin. To the worldling death is the beginning of sorrows, but to the believer it is admission into glory. To the rebel death is imprisonment, but to the believer it is freedom.

Our Saviour has also taken the fear of death away from those who trust Him by ASSURING THEM THAT THEIR SOULS WILL GO IMMEDIATELY TO BE WITH THE LORD. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am: that they may behold my glory." "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord!" Knowing this, I can no longer fear to die.

OUR LORD HAS DELIVERED US FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH BY ASSURING US OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR BODIES (I Thess. 2:13-18). We must die. But, blessed be God, we shall arise! This is my satisfying confidence: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me!" With such a hope, the grave causes me no alarm! Would you be free from fear of death? Look to Christ in faith: Christ as your Substitute, Christ rising as your Representative, Christ living as your Mediator, Christ coming as your King.

2. My second suggestion is this: THINK AND MEDITATE ON WHAT IT IS TO DIE IN CHRIST. We know that those who die in the Lord are blessedly safe and happy. Even Balaam saw that and desired to die the death of the righteous. What makes the death of the righteous so blessed? It is this: DEATH WILL BRING US INTO THE PRESENCE OF MANY FRIENDS. Death takes a wife from her husband, a child from its mother, and a father from his family. We cheer ourselves, however, with the prospect of a happy reunion in glory. It is true, above all else, that we will see Christ and be with Him. But it is also promised that we will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When we die we will leave some behind, but we are going up to "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven." And we shall know one another then, even better than we do now, even as the disciples knew Moses and Elijah on the mount.

DYING IN CHRIST MEANS OUR MOST EARNEST AND CONSTANT PRAYERS WILL ALL BE ANSWERED. How often have we prayed to be free from our trials and temptations! When we close our eyes in death, we will leave this veil of tears behind. Does your soul long to be free from all sin? It will be when this body lies in the grave. Oh, how our hearts long to be more like Christ! And we shall be perfectly like Him in glory when we have put off this body of flesh. We pray for a brighter and clearer vision of Christ in His glory. After we are no longer hindered by the sight of things in this world, our eyes will be opened to see the Son of God as He is! We need not to weep for those who have died in the Lord! We might well envy them, but not weep for them.

THE DEATH OF GOD'S SAINTS IS ACCOMPANIED WITH MANY COMFORTS. Death can never separate us from the love of Christ. He will go with us through the dark valley. I am sure that the believer never has full

revelations of Christ's love, grace, glory, and greatness as he is given in the hour of death. The Lord will make His people triumphant over the last enemy in that hour.

FINALLY, CONTEMPLATE UPON THE GLORY THAT WILL FOLLOW DEATH. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." We cannot comprehend this glory, but we can think upon it. In Christ heaven is ours, the throne of Christ is ours, the glory of Christ is ours, the crown of life is ours, eternal joy is ours! God is mine! Christ is mine! Heaven is mine! Death is not to be feared, but anticipated!

3. In the last place, if you would be free from the fear of death, **LIVE EVERY DAY AS THOUGH IT WERE YOUR LAST.** Beloved, get into the habit of dying to this world. Let us die daily. Hold everything here with a loose hand. Learn to live in this world in the awareness that everything here is perishing. Live not for the perishing things of times but for the lasting things of eternity. Live as a traveler through this world. Do not become too fond of it. Soon you will have to let it go. Be prepared at a moment's notice to do so.

I exhort you to walk with God. "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; because God took him." Walk with God; and when you die you will walk into glory. Press as much as you can into each day for the glory of Christ and the service of His kingdom. You must soon die: put your affairs in order. Be ready for that happy day when the Son of God calls you home!

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