

No Fear In Death

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At the end of Hebrews 2, the Hebrew writer introduces the point that Jesus was a “merciful and faithful High Priest”, a point he will more fully develop later in the epistle. He notes that it was important for Jesus to experience the same things we experience so that he might be the perfect High Priest.

One of the experiences that he shared with us was death. And as a result of his death, he was able to do something that nobody else can do - take away the power of death and the fear of death. *“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* (Heb. 2:14-15)

Many people don't even like to talk about death. Death is scary on many fronts. It's the fear of the unknown. We don't know what death really feels like. We can't see the other side, so we don't really know what awaits us. Nobody has died and come back from the grave to tell us what it's like. And death is so final. There is no return from death. Those who have died are not coming back to us. Death is the end...in many people's minds.

It's also scary for those who believe in being judged by God for the way they lived their life on earth. Knowing we have to answer for the things done in this life can be very scary - especially if we haven't lived according to how we are instructed to live in the Bible.

We will not have another opportunity, once we die, to fix any wrongs we have committed. It will be too late to say “I'm sorry” to those we have offended. It will be too late to ask God for forgiveness for our rebellious ways. God will not give us a second chance. Actually, when we think about it, he's already given us many second chances. Each day is another opportunity. But death is final. There will be no more last chances. That's scary.

But these verses give us a couple of insights into death that are actually comforting for the Christian.

First, death is the power of Satan. Death was not in God's plan - life was. Remember in the Garden of Eden there was the Tree of Life. God did not want man to die, but due to the sin that Satan introduced into the world, death was also introduced. Too often, people blame God for death, for allowing people to die, for taking people's lives. But death is not God's fault. It's our own fault for sinning, and death is from Satan.

God doesn't want death for man. He wants life. Death is God's enemy. Notice what Paul said to the Corinthians. *“Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”* (1 Cor. 15:24-26) He will put an end to all authority and power. That includes Satan's authority and power and the death over which he has power. That's great news! Death will be defeated! God will overcome!

Because of this fact, we have no reason to fear death if we have been faithful to our God. While we don't know exactly what death feels like, and while we don't know exactly what we will experience and what we will see, we do know that ultimately Jesus is on the other side. We do know that death is not really final. We know it's really just the beginning for Christians. We know that we will no longer be

in bondage to the mortal and imperfect body. And we know that we have nothing to fear because Jesus has secured the victory on our behalf. Satan and his power has already been defeated by the resurrection of Jesus. What comforting thoughts!

This is why the funerals of Christians are actually joyous occasions instead of sad ones. They are going home. They get to go be with their Brother and their Father. They receive the comfort that we all desire. They have overcome the power and fear of death through Jesus Christ.

So what does this mean for me and you? First, we don't need to let the fact of death cripple us in fear. Rather, we ought to use it as motivation. We know what lies ahead. Later in Hebrews, the writer says, "*it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...*" (Heb. 9:27). We need to be living our life with the understanding that death is final and that we will face the judgment of God afterwards. This life on earth is not all there is. We need to live our life with eternity in view rather than our typical myopic view seeing only the here and now.

And this also means we can rejoice in the victory over Satan and his power of death. And we don't need to be fearful of death. Rather, we ought to look forward to it! Paul certainly did. "For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." (Phil. 1:23) And Peter said we ought to look forward to the coming Day of the Lord (2 Peter 3:12). We can only look for and hasten the coming of the Lord if we are faithful to him. What a day that will be! A day of victory! And the beginning of an eternity with our Father.