

Fear of Death

Heb 2:14-15

1

14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, **15** and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

God created man as a survivor. For that reason, it is a natural thing that man should fear to die. Remember, man was not originally created to die. When Adam and Eve were first placed in the Garden of Eden, the intent was that they would tend the Garden, obey the commandments, and live there forever.

Gen 3:22

2

22 Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—

There was no reason man should have fallen and brought death to the world.

Rom 5:12

3

12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

But now that sin has entered into the world and with it death, the seeds of corruption are in this flesh of ours, which is what Paul is talking about in Rom. 7, and then it is appointed unto men once to die.

Heb 9:27

4

27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

5 Can you see the conundrum, the problematic challenge that man faces? He was created to be a survivor, but his fate is to be death. This fear of death, this natural fear of death, is not wrong. In fact, it serves a very high purpose in the motivation of each of us. Think about this for a minute, not to be morbid, but if it weren't for this fear, how many people that are despondent, sorrowful, angry at life because of the problems they are facing, would choose suicide. But, fortunately, that fear helps to motivate man to walk away from that precipice and continue fighting to stay alive.

You see, the fear of death serves a good purpose, and is, in itself, right; but it can rapidly go beyond the point where it is right and turn into something else. Picture the times of the early Church when Roman persecution was attacking those who professed a faith in God, Christ, and followed their Word, picture having heard that Word and the roots of faith beginning to take hold in your heart, and then seeing the Roman soldiers taking your neighbor that has been teaching you and putting them to death. Or imagine being in Jerusalem shortly after the Day of Pentecost and hearing about what happened and you start to investigate and listen to this teaching and it begins to draw you towards it, then you watch as Saul holds the coats of those that proceed to stone Stephen to death. How do we react? We see that the result of naming Christ as our Savior and coming to Him through

faithful obedience may very well result in our being put to death, what do we do? Do we repress the natural fear of death and seek God through Christ and the Word, or does that fear cause us to walk away from beginnings of faith? The fear of the reaction of the world to faith in God has kept many from acting on their faith and seeking to cause it to grow.

In the early days of the Church there were many that went willingly to the stake, with shouts of victory, laying down their lives for the sake of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 4:12-13

6

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; **13** but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

For those early Christians, professing faith in Christ, was taking a step towards their fear. The question begs to be asked, WHY? What was it about this faith that would prompt someone to face that fear and even move towards it? We have all heard the stories of those that have overcome their fear to sacrifice their lives, soldiers falling on the grenade, husbands stepping in front of their wives to take the thief's bullet, mothers throwing their child from in front of the oncoming car and being struck themselves. When the motivation is strong enough, the fear can be overcome. What is it about this faith that motivated so many to overcome their fear? There are some thoughts concerning this fear that I think are worth exploring.

Matt 10:28

7

28 Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Jesus tells us that there should be a fear within us, but not a fear for the death of the physical, rather we are to fear the death of the spiritual. As we illustrated earlier, physical death will happen to everyone. It is unavoidable. So the fear of death, physical death, is not the foe. It is the future, a future that cannot be stopped. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to fear the inevitable, but what about this idea of spiritual death, the destruction of the soul and body in hell?

8

1) Where do we look to be delivered from the fear of eternal death?

I guess the first thing to consider is whether or not eternal death is even real. That really is the problem. Everyone knows that physical death is real, that is the end that we all face in this life. That is why it is feared, we can't stop it. But if everyone could become just as convinced that spiritual death is real and can be just as inevitable, then maybe the fear of that death would motivate them to seek the only thing that can eliminate that fear. That is the question in our point of discussion, where do we look? We need to remember the words of David...

Ps 68:19-20

9

19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, The God who is our salvation. **20** God is to us a God of deliverances; And to God the Lord belong escapes from death. NASV

Notice how it reads in the KJV...

Ps 68:19-20

19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation.

20 He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. KJV

We glorify God when we, like Job, can say...

Job 13:15-16

10

15 "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.

16 "This also will be my salvation, For a godless man may not come before His presence.

This is an interesting understanding. We show our trust in God and Christ when we show our love for them through faithful obedience to the Word. We show our distrust in Him when we choose to disobey. Job manifests the greatest trust there can be...

11

"Though He slay me, I will hope in Him"

So, "How do we get rid of this fear?" Truthfully, we shouldn't try to get rid of it by forgetting about it. Denial of it, no more eliminates it, than denial of the common cold. Man can deny the eternal death of the scriptures right up to the point that he dies and faces the judgment.

Rom 8:12-13

12

12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— **13** for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Paul points out that if we live by the flesh then we will die, but that if we want to live, we must live by the Spirit and not by the flesh. The context of his discussion here isn't physical death, we know that because there is no way to cheat physical death, it comes to all men, rather he is speaking of Spiritual death, eternal death. That death can be fought off, and he tells us the way to do that, is to live by the Spirit.

Gal 5:22-26

13

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24** Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

The conclusion that Paul draws is that if we want to live, we must live by the Spirit and if we are to live by the Spirit we must walk by the Spirit. We can stop this death from affecting us, if we walk by the Spirit. This brings us to our next point...

14

2) How can this death be overcome?

The world fights death with every ounce its being. The medical industry is the largest industry in the world behind the military. Most everyone, unless they are lucky enough to work for someone who pays it for them, spends a good portion of their income for medical insurance to help pay for the bills when they come. And eventually they will come. That is the burden everyone bears. Science spends years of time trying to find cures for every disease imaginable. Please don't misunderstand this, I am not saying that that is a bad thing, it most certainly isn't. Taking care of

one's health should be a priority and medical science has done wonders. Polio is all but eradicated, along with diphtheria, bubonic plague, and many, many other life threatening diseases. The point is that people recognize and fear death so they go to whatever length is necessary to try and avoid it, but in the end it catches up to each of us.

James 1:14-15

15

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. **15** Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

Well, how easy is that. Sin brings death, so to avoid death, we avoid sin. The key in this avoidance is accepting that there is a death other than the physical, that sin is what causes that death, and that there is a way to overcome it. Until we accept that that death is real, we won't do a thing to prevent it. Step one is...

16

A) Hearing

Belief that Spiritual death is real, belief that there is a way it can be defeated, and belief in the way it can be overcome. That is what the scriptures teach. Seven times in Rev. Jesus says that...

Rev 2:7

17

7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

Here then is our third point...

18

3) What is required from us to overcome this death

19

B) Belief

2 Thess 2:13

20

13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

The KJV there reads, "Belief in the truth." Salvation from Spiritual death is dependent upon the choice we make concerning the truth of God, the Word. That belief begins with the complete and total acceptance of Jesus, both as a man and as the Son of the Living God. But death is not overcome through faith only...

James 2:24

21

24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

The point here isn't that works and faith are separated but that they must work together in achieving justification.

James 2:26

22

26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

The funny thing about the concept that there is nothing required for us to do in responding to God's call except believe, is that belief in and of itself is a work. It is something we must do, a work. We must believe and we must... **23** C) Repent...

Acts 2:38 24

38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Repentance, turning our will to God's, and faithfully obeying His commandments through love, John 14:15. Once we accept that Jesus is the Son of God and we must come to God through Him and faithful obedience, we must show that faith and repentance in our actions and word. We must confess Jesus as the Christ and live that confession in our lives. Paul gives a perfect summation of this process in...

Rom 10:8-10 25

8 But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, **9** that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; **10** for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 26 D) Confess

Then we see in...

Acts 22:16 27

16 Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

When seen in light of...

1 Peter 3:21 28

21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

God's plan provides us with the way to overcome the spiritual death that awaits all who choose to ignore His call. It leads us to salvation through Christ and it keeps us there even if we fall after coming to Him. 29 E) Baptism

Acts 8:22-24 30

22 Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. **23** For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." **24** But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

What is our choice? Have we allowed ourselves to fall into the gall of bitterness like Simon had? That is a condition of the heart. If the condition of our heart towards God and each other has deteriorated then we are in danger of that Eternal Death, perishing, just as he was. Peter tells us the path that must followed to come back to God, Pray for forgiveness; if we give ourselves to Him, He will forgive. 1 John 1:9

- 31 A) Hear
B) Belief
C) Repent
D) Confess
E) Baptism