

Beacons of the Bible

Death

By [Henry Law](#)

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"And he died." Genesis 5

This chapter celebrates the victories of DEATH. The conqueror unfolds his standard over a prostrate world. The chieftains of the elder age pass in review. DEATH meets them. They bow before him. Except Enoch, they all fall slain. DEATH plies his sting, and they cannot escape.

Reader! seek profit from this deathful page. The same destroyer still has like power. He tracks your steps. His eye rests on you. His dart is poised. He soon will overtake. His chilly hand will bear you away. Your life will cease. You will be numbered with the dead. The grave will cover you. You will moulder in the dust. The worms will have their food. Others will take your place. Your name will fade. The sun will rise, as before. Nature will still put on her blithesome robe. The birds will sing. The earth will bear her fruits. Man will go forth to toil--to pleasure and to sin. Your absence will make no lasting void. All will go on, as though you had never lived. Come, then, and be familiar with this leveler. Walk daily by his side. Let him be no stranger. Wise acquaintance turns his frowns to smiles. Grace makes this foe a precious friend.

Let us consider the womb which bore this mighty one. Whence came his being? In what cradle was he nursed? Who forged his fearful armor? Who braced him with such indomitable strength? Who gave him chains to bind all Adam's race? Who sent him forth resistless to subdue? At once a negative appears. Death forms no part of man's original. The first fabric had no flaw. It upraised its head grand in enduring life. It held no seed of imperfection or decay. Old age--decrepitude--disease--were not at first born with man's body. Mortality is not his necessary adjunct. Life possesses not in itself the ingredients of decline.

But life depended on a sinless course. It was the comrade of obedience. If disobedience intervened, there must be penalty. The penalty was death. "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die" [dying you shall die] Genesis 2:17, Man fell. Transgression soiled him. Mortality ensued. The beauteous frame lost its unfading youth. Dust it was, and now to dust it must return. See then the cause of death. Sin brought in this ruin. The sting--the barbed point--the

conquering weapon--the relentless shaft of death, is sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin--and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned." Rom. 5:12.

Thus the poisonous stream is traced to its true source. The deep roots of the tree are found. The seed is seen, from which the withering crop springs. The culprit is detected and is dragged to light. Sin is the murderer. Sin worked the woe. Pile in one mass the countless dead, from Abel to this hour, and ask, Who slew all these? The clear reply is, sin.

Reader! can you read this, and not abhor the monster. SIN is the cause of all the evil which this earth has seen. It is the parent of all the misery yet to come. No tear bedews the cheek--no sigh rends the heart--no pain gives agony--no anguish gnaws, but sin effectuates all. Sin digs each grave. Sin clothes all mourners with their weeds. It marred a fair creation. It marks your *body* for dissolution. Take heed, lest it be ruin to your *soul*.

Let us now analyze more closely the vast tyranny of sin's firstborn--DEATH. See its effects upon that marvelous machine, man's body. It touches. Its touch is ruin. Decomposition instantly ensues. The vital powers wither. Animation is extinct. Motion is fled. The limbs freeze into icy marble. The luster of the sparkling eye is dim. It has no sight. The smell discerns no fragrance. The ear is deaf to melody. We lift the hand--it falls. We pierce the skin--it is insensible to pain. Expression no more brightens in the wan look. The blood no longer flows in warm current. The pulse no longer proclaims vital glow. The "silver cord is loosed, the golden bowl is broken, the pitcher is broken at the fountain, the wheel is broken at the cistern." Eccles. 12:6. Decay invades the frame, and poisons it with effacing finger. The dearest friends shrink from the object of their tenderest love. Its presence cannot be endured. It must be buried out of sight. It must be hidden in kindred dust. Reader! yet a little while, death will turn you to this corruption. "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." Isa. 38:1.

See, then, the fruits of sin, and hate it as the origin of all woe. But limit not the thoughts of death to your own body. Take the widest range. View the whole race of man. Death tramples upon all. No station is too high for its assault. It hurls all monarchs from their thrones. No lowly hut escapes its entrance. It tears away the poorest from poverty's hardest bed. No genius can devise exemption. It annihilates the noblest intellect. It bears off the orator--the poet--the most skilled in arts and science--the hero from the battle-field--the statesman from the helm of empire. It respects not the hoary head. It strangles the infant at the mother's breast. It slays the bridegroom and the bride--the parent and the child--the merry and the sad. Its sway is universal. Within a century it extinguishes the earth of its inhabitants. Its ever-moving scythe knows no repose. Its sword has no scabbard.

It is, moreover, capricious in its work. When least expected, it is near. Sometimes it tarries long. No one can surely state the time--the place of its destroying-

wound. Reader! "set your house in order, for you shall die and not live."

But is this malady without remedy? Is this a night which has no morn? Is there no light behind this cloud? Is there no help? None, if our view be limited to earth. But look off to Jesus. In Him there is all help. He is far mightier than this mighty tyrant. He can recover victims from his grasp. He can snatch the prey from his fangs. He can snap his strongest chains. He can destroy the destroyer. He makes all His followers more than death's conquerors. He plants their feet upon his prostrate neck. He puts a new song into triumphant lips, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" 1 Cor. 15:55. Now in the house of pilgrimage the saints may cry in rapturous confidence, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." verse 57.

This background, black with such blackness, throws into dazzling light the Gospel triumph. But here all language fails. No tongue can speak the glories of our Jesus. No glowing touch can picture His excellence. It were easier for color to outshine the sun--or painter's art to eclipse the sparkling diamond--or voice to surpass the thunder's roar, than for words to celebrate the victory over death. But let us calmly view the work of Jesus, and receive His comfort.

He appears on earth. His path is bright evidence that He is more than man. In the long chain of proof, He exhibits death utterly subdued. The cases, probably, were not few. Enumerating His wonders to John's disciples, He adds, "the dead are raised up." Matt. 11:5. We read, also, that "many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Matt. 27:52-53.

Ponder the instances which are specifically given. The Spirit records them, as a cordial to our faith. May His power put life into the narrative!

JAIRUS had a youthful daughter. At tender age she sickens. While the afflicted father implores help, he hears that death has done its work. Surely now all hope is fled! Jesus replies, "Be not afraid, only believe." Mark 5:36. He adds, "She is not dead, but sleeps." The weepers know that life is gone. They laugh Him to scorn. Jesus reaches the lifeless bed. He takes the stiffened hand. He speaks, "little girl, I say unto you, Arise." Exert yourself, O death. Now, show your power. Retain your victim if you can. Brief is the conflict. Death yields. "Immediately, the little girl arose, and walked." Mark 5:42. Let faith crown the victor. He stands death's conqueror.

Again, when He draws near to NAIN'S gates He meets a mournful train. A young man is carried out, the only son of his mother, and she is a widow. Jesus speaks omnipotently, "Young man, I say unto you, Arise." Luke 7:14. Death cannot hinder. His shackles break. "He who was dead sat up and began to speak." Crown Him again. Death is a stricken captive in His mighty hands.

Once more, LAZARUS is sick and dies. He is carried to his rocky cave. Jesus returns. He commands, "Take away the stone." They remonstrate, that death had preyed upon its victim for four days, and that decay had done its work. Jesus cries loudly, "Lazarus, come forth." Death cannot counteract. The mandate compels obedience. Death relaxes its grasp. "He who was dead came forth." John 11:44. Crown Him again.

These instances confirm the fact, that Jesus is mighty to hurl death from his tyrannic throne--to shatter his fetters--to tread down his power. At His bidding the lifeless live again.

A stronger proof remains. JESUS must die in His people's stead. In all things He must be their substitute--drink their cup--pay their penalty--occupy their place. Therefore He voluntarily yields to death. He bows the head and gives up the spirit. But through death He destroys him that had the power of death. Mark the outcome. If death has prevailing power, let it now be shown. Jesus is within its prison. Let death bar fast the gates--rivet the chains--detain its captive--display supremacy. It fails. It is conspicuously defeated. Jesus holds its boasted prowess in derision. It was not possible that He should be held by it. He strides forth from the tomb. He tramples down opposing barriers. He shows Himself again alive by many infallible proofs. Hear the victor's shout, "I am the living one who died. Look, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave." Rev. 1:18

Adore Him by His title, LIFE. Life is the opposite to death. They cannot co-exist. Where one appears the other flees. But Jesus proclaims, "I am the resurrection and the life." John 11:25. The Spirit responds, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory." Col. 3:4. Thus He who is essential life, is life to His believing flock. He graciously repairs all traces of decline. No, His restoration infinitely exceeds the loss. Did sin destroy life in the soul? Are we by nature "dead in trespasses and sins?" He quickens and renews. While we are in our blood, He says unto us, 'Live.'

By His Spirit He imparts new faculties--new energies--new being--new desires. The EYE, once dark, now opened, sees the wonders of the heavenly world--discerns things as they really are--admires God's glory, and the preciousness of Christ--and reads the significance of the Book of books. The EAR, once deaf, now hears the Spirit's call, and drinks in all the glorious promises, and listens to the Shepherd's guiding voice. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life." John 10:27. The FEET, once fast in fetters of insensibility, now alert and active, run in the way of Gospel-rule, and climb unwearied the high hill of Zion, and continue steadfast to the end. The PALATE, once insensible to the Gospel-feast, now has quick relish for the heavenly manna. The blessed ones hunger and thirst after righteousness, and they are filled. Thus, while "the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Rom. 8:10. In Christ we spiritually live.

Consider the body. Here Jesus changes death's whole aspect. He dissolves its power. He takes away all icy terror from its sure approach. Death is no more a dreaded foe. It comes as a welcome friend. It is a jewel in the believer's casket. "All things are yours, life and *death*." It brings tidings that the chariot is ready to convey to endless rest--that the weary pilgrimage is ended--that Jesus is waiting to receive--that the ready mansions are prepared to welcome. Death is no loss to those whose life is Christ. Paul felt the truth, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. 1:21. To depart and to be with Christ is far better. But who can tell what gain? who can measure the length and breadth of the far better! Death opens the cage-door, and the liberated spirit flies to the sight of Jesus. It dissolves the detaining clay, and instantly the spirit is in Paradise. It touches, and its touch is never-ending bliss. Thus Jesus is our Life. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits." Ps. 103:1.

But the triumph of triumphs is not yet told. The consummating scene comes on speedily. Then will believers raise victorious heads. Their earthly frames will spring forth from their graves. A voice--a mighty voice--the voice of Jesus shall call, and they shall stand again on earth, a living multitude in living bodies. But oh! how changed! All traces of sin, and sin's hideousness, and sin's deformity, and sin's infirmity are forever gone. Corruption--dishonor--weakness disappear. Incorruption--glory--power, reign. The natural body is now spiritual--"When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2. Where is death? It is completely vanquished. It is utterly abolished. It is swallowed up in victory. "Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." Rev. 20:14.

Thus believers in resurrection-robos inherit life--the life of immortality--the life of glory--the life of blessedness in the presence of God and of the Lamb. Who will not love, and bless, and serve this great Redeemer--this glorious Conqueror--our thrice-precious Jesus! How perfect is His work! Its pinnacle cannot be higher. What adorations can we adequately render! Let every breath be praise. Let our few days on earth be wholly a thank-offering. Let our one study be to magnify His name. How little is all life-long service when weighed against the debt! But by the Spirit's help, let all we can do be most gladly done. And while abounding in the work of the Lord, let us ascribe all strength--all pardon--all salvation to free grace! The happiest pilgrimage on earth is living out of self, in Christ, to God--in sight of heaven--in hope of glory--smiling at death, and realizing endless life. Hallelujah! Come Lord Jesus! Amen.

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