

**The Practice of Piety:
a Puritan devotional manual, directing a Christian how to live,
that he may please God**

Consolations against the fear of death

By [Lewis Bayly](#)

(1611)

If in the time of your sickness you find yourself fearful to die, meditate—

1. That it argues a weak mind, to fear that which is not; for there is no death for Christians (Isa 25:7-8). Whoever believes in Christ, shall never die (John 11:26). Let them fear death, who live without Christ. Christians do not die; but when they please God, they are like Enoch translated unto God (Gen 5:24;) their pains are but Elijah's fiery chariot to carry them up to heaven (2 Kings 2:11-12;) or like the sores of Lazarus sending them to Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:23.) In a word, if you are one of those who, like Lazarus, love Jesus, your sickness is not unto the death, but for the glory of God (John 11:4), who of his love changes your living death to an everlasting life. And if many heathen men, as Socrates, Curtius, Seneca, etc., died willingly, when they might have lived, in hope of the immortality of the soul; will you, being trained so long in Christ's school, and now called to the marriage-supper of the blessed Lamb (Rev 19:7), be one of those guests who refuse to go to that joyful banquet? God forbid!

2. Remember that your abode here is but the second stage of your life; for after you had first lived nine months in your mother's womb, you were of necessity driven thence to live here in a second stage of life. And when that number of months which God has determined for this life has expired (Job 14:5), you must likewise leave this and pass to a third stage in the other world, which never ends; which, to those who live and die in the Lord, surpasses as far this kind of life as this does that stage which one lives in his mother's womb. To this last and most excellent degree of life, through this door passed Christ himself, and all his saints who were before you; and so shall all the rest after you. Why should you fear that which is common to all God's elect? why should that be unwelcome to you, which was so welcome to all them? Fear not death, for as it is the exodus of an evil world--so it is the genesis of a better world; the end of a temporal life--but the beginning of an eternal life.

3. Consider that there are but three things that can make death so fearful to you:

First, The loss you have thereby;

Secondly, The pain that is therein;

Thirdly, The terrible effects which follow after.

All these are but false fires and causeless fears.

For the first, If you leave here uncertain goods--which thieves may rob; you shall find in heaven a true treasure--which can never be taken away (Matt 6:19-20.) These were but lent you as a steward upon accounts--those shall be given you as your reward forever. If you leave a loving wife, you shall be married to Christ, which is more lovely. If you leave children and friends, you shall there find all your pious ancestors—yes, Christ, and all his blessed saints and angels; and as many of your children as are God's children, shall there follow after you. You leave an earthly possession and a house of clay (2 Cor 5:1), and you shall enjoy an heavenly inheritance and mansion of glory, which is purchased, prepared, and reserved for you (John 14:2.) What have you lost? Nay, is not death unto you gain? Go home, go home, and we will follow after you.

Secondly, For the pain in death. The fear of death more pains many, than the very pangs of death; for many a Christian dies without any great pangs or pains. Pitch the anchor of your hope on the firm ground of the word of God, who has promised in your weakness to perfect his strength (2 Cor 12:9), and Christ will shortly turn all your temporal pains to his eternal joys.

Lastly, As for the terrible effects which follow after death, they belong not unto you, being a member of Christ; for Christ by his death has taken away the sting of death to the faithful, so that now there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1.) And Christ has protested, that he who believes in him has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death unto life (John 5:24.) Upon which the Holy Spirit from heaven says, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; and that from henceforth they rest from their labors and their works do follow them." In respect, therefore, of the faithful, death is swallowed up in victory, and its sting, which is sin and the punishment of it--is taken away by Christ (1 Cor 15:54.) Hence death is called, in respect of our bodies, a sleep and rest (1 Thess 4:13; Isa 26; Rev 14;) in respect of our souls, a going to our heavenly Father, a departing in peace, a removing from this body to go to the Lord, a dissolution of soul and body to be with Christ.

What shall I say? "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." These pains are but your throes and travail to bring forth eternal life. And who would not pass through hell, to go to paradise? much more through death. There is nothing after death that you need fear; not your sins, because Christ has paid your ransom; not the Judge, for he is your loving brother; not the grave, for it is

the Lord's bed; not hell, for your Redeemer keeps the keys; not the devil, for God's holy angels pitch their tents about you, and will not leave you until they bring you to heaven. You were never nearer eternal life; glorify, therefore, Christ by a blessed death. Say cheerfully, "Come, Lord Jesus, for your servant comes unto you. I am willing, Lord help my weakness."

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