



HUBERHEIGHTS  
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

## Don't You WANT to Die?

K. Jason French

**I don't mean** to be morbid or insensitive. And I admit, it's a somewhat strange question to ask much less to make a rhetorical one. But another way true believers should seek to live in light of the resurrection is to appropriately desire to die. For the true follower of Christ, there should *always* be a part of us that desires to die because of what we seek to gain when we do, namely, to be with God in Christ.

In the normal world, death is rightly seen as an odd reality of life, an intruder who comes in, often unannounced and rarely, if ever, really welcomed. But in this current COVID-19 world we live in, the world at large seems consumed with thoughts of death, or at least trying to avoid it.

The writer of Ecclesiastes however, knew that thinking about death from a biblical standpoint, could actually be healthy and a way to honor our Maker. He writes this:

*"It is better to go to the house of mourning  
than to go to the house of feasting,  
for this is the end of all mankind,  
and the living will lay it to heart."*

Eccles. 7:2

Better? *Better* to have a funeral than a party? What in the world is he talking about? How could a funeral be better than a birthday party?

Not all experiences in this life are the same. And not all experiences that are helpful to us are ones we would choose to embrace of our own will.

When my wife had cancer *for the third time, and this time stage 4, metastatic (spreading in multiple places, including 4 brain tumors, 2 liver tumors, and a spot on her lung...) malignant (doing damage that untreated would eventually cause death)*, what was I to think about all this?

This is my wife. This is my bride. This is my love.

We didn't ask to go to the house of mourning. We were led there by a good and gracious heavenly Father because there were things we needed to learn there as we pondered the fragility and brevity of life. James says, *"...you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes."* (James 4:14)

Life is like a mist? Appearing and then vanishing? In short, yes. When we forget the simple but profound truth that we are never promised tomorrow and that our entire lives from a biblical perspective are like a mist and a vapor, steam over a pot of boiling water, it can be easy to feel as though we are more than God has made us.

Death is a humbling reality that if Jesus doesn't return in our lifetime, we will all face. When we go to the house of mourning, we can either embrace the humbling as a gift or we can reject it as a cruel curse.

While it is true that "death" is an enemy, it is also true that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead by the glory of God the Father, death has lost its primary sting in the life of one who looks fully to Christ for salvation.

Paul knew this well as he faced death time and time again for the sake of the Gospel:

*"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality,  
then shall come to pass the saying that is written:  
"Death is swallowed up in victory."  
"O death, where is your victory?  
O death, where is your sting?"  
The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin  
is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory  
through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

1 Cor. 15:54-56

Our outer man, this shell of a body is wasting away every day in various ways and to various degrees. And yet, not even that can keep us from Christ. Rather, the shedding of this shell in death—no matter the means—will be a great victory in Christ because the power and sting of sin has already been removed. Our sins have been forgiven in Christ and thus, in Christ, we have eternal life. Death doesn't have to sting in the life of a believer like it does with those who have no hope.

For the one trusting in Christ, death is to be fully and finally rescued from even the presence of sin. Doesn't that sound good?

Yes, though we should grieve when we encounter suffering, pain, and death in this life, we can and should rejoice in what Christ has done for us in his own death and resurrection.

What I learned through my wife's multiple bouts with cancer was that we don't typically choose the time of our suffering even as we will likely not choose the day of our death. But to know the grace of God in understanding death, not as a final scene, but as an entrance into the presence of the Lord forever is a great and mighty weapon against all the fears and sadness surrounding our mortal perspective.

I long to be like the Apostle Paul who said,

*"...it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better."*

Philippians 1:20–23

How do we live in a world in a way that honors the Christ who died to save us? How can we live "with full courage?"

By God's grace, we can live trusting that whether we live or die, there is much to be gained in both, but the gain of the latter is far greater than the former. To live can be living for Christ as we seek to show others what it means to love God, to trust and serve him, and to serve others in accords with the gospel. To die in and for Christ is to know a gain that is literally out of this world.

Paul felt somewhat trapped between two great desires, but his desires were imbalanced and righty so.

His greater desire was to "depart and be with Christ." Why?

"...FOR (or because) *THAT* is FAR BETTER!"

*Do you agree with Paul's conclusion?*

Of course we are not looking to end our own lives or hasten the day in an unrighteous way through the folly of our decisions or faulty will. But, if what Paul desired is true—and it is—we too can regard death as a way to gain more of what we have already tasted of the sweetness of Christ in this present life.

Though we mourn those who have gone before us and though we rightly pray for the sick that God would have mercy and heal and prevent death according to his sovereign will, there should also always be a better part of us that says in faith, "I really would rather depart because to die is gain. To die in faith is to depart and be with Christ and that is not just better.

It is **FAR** BETTER.

As we have celebrated the life, death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, let us labor to see our own death and the death of our loved ones, not only as an enemy to be finally destroyed in the lake of fire, but as a doorway behind which our Lord, Savior, and Greatest Treasure awaits us, ready to say to all who are His,

*"Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."*

Matthew 25:23

For the true and trusting follower of Christ, death is not the end. It is nothing to fear. It is a defeated foe. For the believer, death is the doorway to the eternal gain of being with Christ and entering into His joy with our Father in heaven.

So, let us remember this all-important way for us to live in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, not fearing death but appropriately longing for the day when we finally see Jesus face to face. Let's get ready and help each other look forward, not mainly to all that we will lose by leaving this life, but what we will gain that is of far greater value in the presence of Christ with God.

*May God grant us the grace to see death as a temporary hurdle that Christ has already overcome and to know and trust that even though our outer "shell" of our body may weaken and one day pass away, the eternal life we have in Christ never will!*