

THE DEATH OF DEATH

(In the Death of Christ)

And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.
Excerpt from 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 New Living Translation (NLT)

I. The Christ-follower's Special Hope

A. The Importance of Hope

1. A lot is being said today about "HOPE"-and it's desperately needed.
2. Hope is the "anchor of the soul", (Hebrews 6:19), the great stabilizer that keeps our lives from being swept overboard into a stormy sea of doubt and despair!

B. Hope in the Midst of Sin, Sickness and Death

1. I need my HOPE...every day, because I live in a world in chaos because of sin, sickness and death.
2. I need HOPE to anchor my soul when I see firsthand the sins of men and the disastrous effects that attack our hope:
 - a. The governor of one of the largest states in America, resigning his office, confessing multiple visits and spending tens of thousands of dollars visiting prostitutes. A multi-millionaire with an honored title, loving wife and teenage daughters, disgraced, humiliated, stripped of his dignity and his office, while his wife stands there by his side. I can only wonder.
 - b. A week later, his replacement is disgraced by reports that he and his wife also confessed to multiple adulteries.
 - c. I see young co-eds kidnapped and murdered.
 - d. I see a man stand in his pulpit and ask God to damn America, spewing hatred and lies, cursing the very country that provides him with the freedom to make statements he'd be murdered for if he preached in some of the countries he seems to prefer...wondering what kind of sins had been done to this man to make him so full of hatred.
 - e. And of course, I see my own sins, my own places where I fall short of the glory of God...holding on to my hope that God is merciful and will forgive me.

3. I also need HOPE in the face of the sickness and disease that attack our bodies...

- a. Standing by the bedside of the sick and the hurting
- b. Watching some of you battle physical attacks, sickness, disease and pain.

4. But the greatest thief of hope, greater than SIN, greater than SICKNESS, yes the GREATEST enemy of hope is DEATH itself, the "Grim Reaper."

- a. The first deaths I remember are my great grandfather and great grandmother, who died at 103, a woman who remembered seeing the wagons filled with Confederate soldiers rolling along the dirt roads of their little north Louisiana town.
- b. Since then I have stood near so many graves- my own dear brother's death at 31 years of age, victim of a freak accident at an oil refinery.
- c. I have done funeral services for my mother, my father and Elizabeth's mother, all within a brutal six-month period in 1996.
- d. In November we buried a friend to many of us here, victim of a chronic depression that eventually drove her to take her life.
- e. Just Tuesday night, the call came...Elizabeth's niece had died. Hopelessly deformed from birth, 24 years of life as a near vegetable, now finally at peace, with death coming as a mercy.

5. Yes, death is the one inescapable experience of all mortal men.

How frail is humanity!
How short is life, how full of trouble!
We blossom like a flower and then wither.
Like a passing shadow, we quickly disappear.
Job 14:1-2 NLT

You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand.
My entire lifetime is just a moment to you;
at best, each of us is but a breath.
Ps 39:5 NLT

Each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment.
Hebrews 9:27 NLT

No one can live forever; all will die.
No one can escape the power of the grave.
Psalm 89:48 NLT

II. The Gospel: Hope for Both Sides of the Grave!

A. We Live...and Die...in Hope

...if our hope in Christ is only for this life, *we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.*
1 Corinthians 15:19 New Living Translation (NLT)

1. We can dare to hope in the presence of sin and sickness, but our HOPE is not limited to these!

a. JESUS TOOK AWAY OUR SINS

And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ died once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.
Hebrews 9:27-28 NLT

b. JESUS BORE OUR SICKNESSES

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.
Isaiah 53:5 KJV

2. But He didn't stop there!

B. The Death of Death in the Death of Christ

1. The picture of Christ on the cross is understood in the sacrificial LAMB of the Old Testament....the SINS of the people were "laid" on the lamb, which was then slain for atonement!

2. The death of the LAMB as an innocent SUBSTITUTE satisfied the justice of God.

3. But Jesus, the "LAMB OF GOD", not only DIED for our SINS...He was RAISED from the dead for our justification!

who (Jesus) was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.
Rom 4:25 NKJV

4. The resurrection of Christ AFTER He paid for our sins PROVES God has ACCEPTED Christ's payment for our sins and that we are DELIVERED from death in the same way we are FORGIVEN of our sins!

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might *destroy him that had the power of death*, that is, the devil;

And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Hebrews 2:14-15 KJV

5. The death of Christ was the DEATH of the POWER of DEATH!
6. The death of Christ “swallowed up” death in victory!
7. The death of death for those who believe, was accomplished by the death of Christ!

So...Death is swallowed up in victory.
 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.
 But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
 Excerpted from 1 Corinthians 15:54-57 KJV

III. Conclusion

1. Our hope today is not only for today!
2. Our hope in Christ covers both sides of the grave!
3. The same One Who “swallowed” up my sins, also “swallowed” up death!
4. Invitation: Not only forgiveness for TODAY, but an escape from the “SECOND DEATH” on the other side!
5. The “first death” is inescapable, a penalty for Adam’s sin that comes upon all. But the “second death” is eternal separation from God....

THE POWER OF THE “SECOND DEATH” WAS SWALLOWED UP IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST!!!

"Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. Whoever is victorious will not be harmed by *the second death*.
 Revelation 2:11 NLT

Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. *This lake of fire is the second death*.
 And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.
 Rev 20:14-15 NLT

And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children. But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."
 Rev 21:5-8 NLT

6. So, in Christ, our “hope” sustains us through sin, sickness and even death...our hope sustains us on BOTH sides of the grave!

Won't you BELIEVE on Him today?