

THE TEACHING
 LEGACY
 OF DEREK PRINCE

Hope in Christ, part 1

Is there something in you that flinches at the mention of the word *death*? Is your first reaction to stop reading? If so, that is a sure indication that you, in particular, need to open your heart to this message. ¶ In our contemporary culture, there has been an unadvertised effort to remove anything that might be unpleasant or painful from the concept of death. We no longer speak about a cemetery, instead we use a phrase such as “a memorial garden.” And when the body of a dead person is displayed for view before burial, everything possible is done to minimize the changes caused by death.

Still, I believe it is important that we do not allow ourselves to forget one simple, objective, unchanging fact: death is real and it is unpleasant. It is painful and cruel. Any view of life that cannot accept this fact is deceptive and unrealistic. Any philosophy or religion that does not have a redemptive answer to the harsh reality of death is inadequate to meet the needs of humanity. What distinguishes the Christian faith from all other religions and philosophies is that it has a positive, proven answer to death.

When modern medicine encounters a physical problem it seeks to provide three statements: a

diagnosis, a prognosis, and a remedy. The diagnosis reveals the cause; the prognosis predicts the course that the disease will take; and the remedy, of course, is the answer to the disease.

When we face the topic of death, the Bible offers us all three of these. The diagnosis is stated very simply in Scripture: “*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned*” (Romans 5:12 NKJ).

So, death came through sin. If there had never been sin, there never would have been death. But because all men have sinned, death comes to all men.

In its prognosis, the Bible indicates that death



comes in three successive stages. The first is spiritual death. God said to Adam, as He warned him about the tree of knowledge of good and evil: *“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”* (Genesis 2:17 NKJ).

God told Adam *“in the day that you eat you will die.”* As we understand death, Adam lived another 900 years and more. But in the very day that he sinned he was cut off, or alienated from, a life with God. In that moment he died spiritually. In Ephesians 2:1 Paul reminds the Christians in Ephesus what their spiritual condition was before they knew Christ: *“And you He made **alive**, who were **dead** in trespasses and sins”* (NKJ, *emphasis added*).

Paul was not speaking of a physical death, but a spiritual death—alienation from God. Once man’s spirit was cut off from God by sin, his physical life was like a battery that could not be recharged. It continued to function for quite a while, but ultimately it would run down.

The second phase is physical death. This is what we actually call “death”—the separation of the soul

from the body. There is a visible result in the condition of the body. It begins to decay. But the condition of the soul remains unchanged.

The third phase is what the Bible calls “the second death.” This is something that is known only through the revelation of Scripture: *“This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire”* (Revelation 20:14–15 NKJ).

As we study this picture, we see two important elements. First, this second death is final, eternal, irrevocable banishment from the presence of God. From the second death there is no way back. Second, it is not a cessation of consciousness, for there is never a cessation of consciousness. Personality remains conscious both in this life and afterward. We never escape our own consciousness.

The remedy for death is, of course, Jesus—the One who came to avenge our death at the hand of Satan. He did this by taking our death upon Himself, by paying our penalty. In this way, He set us free from the fear of death.

John 10 says Satan was the thief who came to steal. But Jesus said, *“I have come that they may*

have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” So Jesus gave us back our inheritance. In our relationship to Jesus, we become pleasing and acceptable to God. Condemnation is gone. Fear is gone. We can say with the apostle John, *“The darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining”* (1 John 2:8 NKJ).

How Did He Do That?

The entire revelation of Scripture centers in the atonement—the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross, and His triumphant resurrection. Atonement restores the sinner to God’s favor. It is a total reconciliation and union.

One vivid picture that illustrates the place of the atonement in the total message of the Gospel is that of a wheel. In a common wheel, there are three sections: the outer circle, the spokes and the hub. In this picture, the outer circle represents God’s complete provision for every area of our lives—spiritual, physical, and material, for time and through eternity. The total provision of God through the Gospel is like that full-orbed circle

of the wheel. It covers everything.

The spokes that support the outer wheel are the ways that God makes provision. One spoke would be forgiveness, which gives us peace; another spoke healing, which gives us health; another deliverance, which gives us liberty; and another would be sanctification, which gives us holiness. In that way, the spokes support the outer rim, which is God's provision.

The hub—the very center—is the atonement. The spokes rest upon the hub. Without the hub they have nothing to support them. Also, through the hub comes the driving power that turns the wheel. It is the hub of the atonement on which everything else depends—through which the power for the Christian life is supplied. Hebrews 2:9 makes it more clear:

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. (NKJ)

Notice that last phrase: “That He [Jesus], by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.” He tasted

our death; He took our place. That which was due to us came upon Him. This is stated again in Isaiah 53:6:

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* (NIV)

The word that is translated *iniquity* also has the meaning of “rebellion.” The rebellion of the whole human race is summed up in that phrase. Each one of us has turned to his own way. But as Jesus hung on the cross, all our rebellion was laid upon Him. And then, upon Him as He hung there, came all the evil consequences of rebellion: sickness, rejection, pain, agony, and finally death. But He did not die for Himself; He died our death. He tasted death in our place.

Resurrection

The greatest event of all history is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the heart of the Christian message. Without the resurrection there is no Christian message. It

all revolves around the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ consists of three simple historical facts—events that have actually taken place in human history and are attested by many reliable witnesses. In 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, Paul establishes himself as one of those reliable witnesses.

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. (NKJ)

Paul states for us the Gospel that he preached: the Gospel that is essential to believe for salvation. It centers, first of all, in the person of Christ. Second, it centers in three great historical facts that relate to Jesus Christ: He *died*, was *buried*, and *rose again* the third day.

Imprint those facts on your heart. Paul says, “These are the

facts by which you are saved—unless you believed in vain.” Paul is saying that if, at any time, they should get away from these basic facts into some kind of religious theories, fantasies, or subjective experiences, then they would have believed in vain. The same is true for you and me.

Paul offers two confirmations of these historical facts. First, they are attested by the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament. Second, they are attested by the testimony of many reliable witnesses.

The primary confirmation of these facts is the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament. The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes that the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures had to be fulfilled—that not one of them could fail. This theme is woven throughout the entire New Testament—both in the life of Jesus Himself and in the subsequent activities of His apostles and of the early church.

Not only had the resurrection been predicted in the Old Testament, but Jesus Himself clearly predicted His own resurrection because He was familiar with the Scriptures of the Old Testament prophets.

The second source of confirmation is the testimony of many reliable witnesses who saw Jesus and fellowshiped with Him after He rose from the dead.

So we have three facts: Christ died. He was buried. He rose again. And we have two sources of confirmation: the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament and the testimony of many reliable witnesses.

Let me add five supporting details related to the resurrection that affirm its validity:

- It was attested by a much greater number of reliable witnesses than would be required to establish a fact in law.
- It produced a dramatic and permanent change in those witnesses, for which there is no satisfactory alternative explanation.
- Adhering to their testimony cost many of these witnesses their lives. They had nothing material to gain from it.
- It has produced a radical change in the course of history. History will never be the same, and there is no satisfactory alternative explanation for that change.
- The risen Christ has continued to reveal Himself personally as alive to countless millions—including me.

One night in 1941, while serving as a soldier in the British Army, I had a direct, personal revelation of Jesus. I was not unduly religious. I was not a person who was seeking something special or fanciful or out of order. There was nothing unusual in my psychology at that moment. But Jesus revealed Himself to me so genuinely and so personally that, from that day to this, I have never been able to doubt that He is alive. His sacrifice on the cross—and His subsequent resurrection—has provided me with the remedy for death. And it can do the same for you.

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