

We Shall not Die, But Live

In the beginning, God created all things in perfection, including man. Man was not created to die, but to live. After his creation, God commanded the man saying, “*Although you may freely eat from every tree of the garden, you shall not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! For in the day when you eat from it you will surely die*” (Genesis 2:16-17). Every time Adam and Eve passed the tree, they were confirmed in their perfection. However, in a fateful moment, they misused their freedom to eat from the tree. They disobeyed their Creator (Genesis 3:6), with the result that death would now come to them and all their descendants. That explains the agony, the fear, the apprehension, humans feel when confronted with death.

Ever since the fall, man is born in imperfection. Since the fall, every child is born with the infectious and fatal malady called sin (Psalm 51:5). Psalm 58:3 says, “*Wicked people have been turning aside since the womb. They have been going astray from their birth, speaking lies.*” Every day, we witness how mankind has doubled down on the original sin. Spiritual death, temporal death, and eternal death are the lot of mankind, “*Who were dead in trespasses and sins...*” (Ephesians 2:1). Nature itself has been ruined by man’s disobedience (Genesis 3:17, Romans 8:22).

The apostle Paul wrote, “*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law*” (1 Corinthians 15:56). Psalm 90 reads, “*The days of our lives have seventy years in them or, if we are strong, they are eighty years. Their pride is only toil and trouble. For life quickly passes, and we fly away*” (90:10). By the Creator’s permission, temporal life may be extended through medical technology. Nevertheless, most people at one time or another have stood at a graveside while the remains of a family member or friend have been lowered into the ground. Survivors have left the cemetery alone. That lonesome walk and a drive by or stroll through a cemetery testifies to the reality that God has the last word! Except for those who still live when the Lord returns in judgment, all people will continue to put off this mortal coil and be returned to dust, “*for dust you are, and to dust you shall return*” (Genesis 3:19).

But how can the claim be made that we shall not die but live— that temporal death is not the end?

Life on earth will end, yes, but all who believe in Christ Jesus are alive in Him, now and though they die in the flesh are assured through Jesus’ word, “*Truly, truly, I tell you that he who listens to My Word and believes Him who has sent Me has eternal life and will not come into judgment but has passed over out of death into life.*”²⁵ *Truly, truly, I tell you that the hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.*²⁶ *For, as the Father has life in Himself, so He has also granted the Son to have life in Himself.*²⁷ *He has also given Him authority to carry out judgment, because He is the Son of Man.*²⁸ *Do not be astonished at this, because an hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice*²⁹ *and will come out. Those who have done good will come out to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil will come out to the resurrection of condemnation*” (John 5:24-29).

The apostle Paul testified before Felix “*that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust*” (Acts 24:15). They “who have done good” were not saved by their good works. Through the Spirit of God, by the righteousness of faith, they bore fruits of righteousness which witness to the believer’s faith in Christ. Conversely, those who have done evil are those whose life of impenitence manifested their rejection of the true God and their refusal in unbelief of the redemption that is in Christ.

In the final judgment, Christ-believers will receive and rejoice in a deathless life. “*Fellow-Christians, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, that you may not grieve like the others, who have no hope.*”¹⁴ *For, since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we believe that even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.*¹⁵ *For this we tell you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are still alive, who are left until the Lord comes, shall certainly not arrive ahead of those who have fallen asleep.*¹⁶ *For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead who are in Christ will rise first.*¹⁷ *After that, we who are still alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we shall always be with the Lord*” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

On the other hand, there will be a living death wherein all Christ-deniers will go away into “*outer darkness*” (Matthew 22:13) into everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46) in which “*There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (Matthew 24:30) because, as Isaiah (66:24) and Mark (9:24) record, “*Their worm will not die, and the fire is not quenched.*”

“*We shall not die, but live*” is not a construct of human reason nor a vague or ethereal hope. The confidence is based upon the Holy Word of the Lord made flesh (John 1: 1,14) Who told grieving Martha upon the death of Lazarus, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die*” (John 11:25-26).