

OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF DEATH... ...THOSE WHO HEAR SHALL LIVE



Jesus came into this world to set us free from fear and bring us life, now....

For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. (Hebrews 2:14b-15)

In other words, Jesus was born into the human race in order to set us free from the fear of death. He experienced death, rose from it, and now gives us a life that death cannot destroy.

So that we don't have to be afraid to die.

So that we have eternal life burning inside us like a fire, right now.

And yet - for most of us that's not our experience. Most of us are scared to death even to think about our own death.

You're on a flight at 39,000 feet and look out and see the left engine on fire. What's your first thought?
"I'm going to die!"

Isn't it ironic that at one time hundreds of young men scattered around the globe were just waiting for the signal to strap on the explosives and go blow themselves up in a crowded subway or a government building, or willing to kill thousands by vaporizing an entire city with a nuclear device. Or today, the Christians who are willing to attack and kill in an apocalyptic fervor in order to rescue their country from their ideological enemies. These guys aren't afraid to die. They see themselves as soldiers in a holy war.

They're angry. "What else do I have to live for anyway", they say. "If I die and take as many of the enemy with me as possible, it will hasten the day that goodness will reign. Besides, I have been taught and led by people who tell me that violence and insurrection is the righteous, godly thing to do if it destroys the sinful.

The problem with that kind of dying is that it increases misery and suffering for everybody.

And the war goes on until everybody's so exhausted and demoralized they can't keep it up any more or until the whole world becomes a police state.

I'm saying all this because the day when most people die of old age seems to be disappearing. Death by violence, mass shootings, famine, plague is on the rise worldwide; and we now know we're not immune in North America or any civilized country.



We're back in the days of Herod, the king. When Herod realized that the wise men had tricked him and refused to guide him to this new baby king in Bethlehem. He solved the problem the way more and more problems are solved...with violence... "Kill all the male babies two years old and under within a three mile radius of Bethlehem!" he ordered.

Yet, this baby who escaped the massacre, was born to die, to make it possible for us to live in such a world as this and not be afraid.

He came to break the curse of death which is tearing the world apart before our eyes.

He came to deliver us, so that we can walk through the smoke and fire and not be afraid.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand."

John 10: 27-28

He's **not** telling you to strap on your suicide bomb and go blow up New York. He's **not** telling you to storm government offices and take down your perceived enemies.

He's saying,

"Walk with me, and no matter what happens, you're safe.

Whatever fire you have to go through, I'll go through with you.

I'll give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.

I'll never leave you or forsake you.

I'm your life - your eternal life, as long as you walk with me."



Ah, but how do we get hold of that confidence?

How do we get the absolute certainty that the Lord Jesus is with me right now and nothing in this world - not even death can separate me from him?

So that I'm invulnerable until my work is done.

So that I'm free from the fear of death.

That's where we should be - all of us, all the time.

Joyfully confident that Christ the Lord will never leave me -

That I'm His forever.

That's where he wants us to be. But how do we get there? How do we overcome the fear of death?

By taking two simple steps.

1. Finding Life in the Cross

Step one in overcoming the fear of death is to come to the cross and find life. Follow the baby from the cradle to the cross but don't stay in Bethlehem. Deliverance from the fear of death comes to us not at Bethlehem but at Calvary. Bethlehem was a bloody place when Herod slaughtered the infants. Israel is still the scene of violence.

But Calvary - the cross where Jesus died - that's where the power of life still flows.

And you don't have to go to the Holy Land to find the cross -it's as near as your breath.

You want to experience the power of Christ?

Hang around the cross until the Spirit of God reveals to you what it means.

Until its redeeming life-giving power begins to flow into your heart.



Take Paul...

And, when I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
(1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

And the power of God flowing into you from the cross drives the fear of death right out of you and fills you with eternal life.

So do what Paul did. Hang around the cross until it brings you to Paradise, not after you die, but right now.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

2. Learning to commune with Jesus.

The second step of overcoming the fear of death is to talk to him and let him talk to you.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”

John 5:25

In this case, he’s not talking about bodies in their graves hearing his voice, he’s talking about the walking dead. Men and women who are physically alive, but spiritually dead, brought from darkness suddenly to light and from the power of Satan to God by hearing his voice.

You come to life when you hear his voice.

You stay alive by communing with him.



And this life is yours forever if you keep communing.

When Jesus says...

“Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”,

...How else can you come to him but by communing with him? Taking his word as a personal word to you. Answering him. Talking to him, who is not only your Lord, but the best friend you ever had.

***I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.***

Psalms 32:8

You don't have to be some super-saint to talk to the Living Christ. All you have to do is what any child knows how to do. Draw near and talk.

Talk!

Commune with him!

Tell him what's on your heart!

There's not a trouble we experience that he doesn't understand from inside.



He's here to deliver us from all fear.

He died and rose again to deliver us from the fear of death.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

Eternal life is not something you get after you die, if you're lucky. It's a relationship with Jesus which begins on this side of the grave and keeps right on going.

Once you have it, the life of Christ in you is so powerful that your physical death becomes a mere blip on the journey. It's nothing. When it comes, it comes.. like crossing the bridge, like going through a doorway.

Of course, until we get to that doorway, our job is to spread life everywhere God sends us.

Our job is to do for others what's been done for us.

To open their eyes.

To bring them from darkness into light and from the power of Satan to God.

That they, too, may receive the forgiveness of sins, and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ ---



--- freedom from the fear of death.

Prayer: Lord, may we look at your cross, your loving death, and see life. May we look until your life giving power drives out the fear of death in us. Dear Lord, may we hear you speaking to us now so that we may live, truly live now. May we continue communing with you at all times...may we continuously expose our hearts to you, coming to you with every need, every concern, every thought...knowing you listen, you care. Thank you that you will be with us through every fire, that you will never abandon us, that we will never be alone. Thank you that you are our eternal life now. Thank you that in a mystery your death and resurrection can deliver us from the fear of death, even untimely death or a violent death. We trust that no matter what you will tenderly carry us and be with us in it. Thank you for caring this much for us. And Lord, give us the voice, the joy in this life that we can open the hearts of many to your loving presence, your tender touch... delivering them from the darkness, from futility and from the fear of death too. Amen.

Message: Richard E. Bieber 2001 originally titled "Those Who Hear Shall Live"

Featured Art: Courtesy of Sinead Kell. Sinead Kell is an amateur artist and does not have an online gallery or store but occasionally posts her art on Prophetic Art Studio on Facebook.

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