

# ***FREE FROM THE FEAR OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH***



One brisk morning you walk out the door and are met at the sidewalk by four well-dressed men who take you by the arm, open the door of their sleek Mercedes and firmly deposit you in the back seat. The car speeds through the town and out onto the open road. After what seems like several hours, the driver turns up a wooded lane and stops in front of a magnificent stone building. You are ushered into a room and given a seat at the end of a long table as the four guards seat themselves on either side.

"He's coming now," whispers one of the guards.

"Who?"

"Why the Accuser, of course."

A man dressed in judges robes enters and settles himself at the head of the table. A book is brought in and opened and all the major sins of your life are read aloud in the presence of these four men.

Secret sins.

Sins no one ever knew.

Sin after sin is carefully described.

Your life, which up to then, seemed more decent than most, suddenly looks hideous, as your past is spread out before you, crowded with all the misdeeds you had long forgotten.

It looks more like the past of a murderer.

How is it possible?

The Accuser looks up from the book and fixes his eyes on you. They are not kind eyes, they are not holy. The Accuser's eyes are hard, cruel and evil.

"You know the penalty", he says.

"I sentence you to death.

You will be returned to your home. When you arrive you will find that the clock hasn't moved one second from the moment you met these guards. You will pick up precisely where you left off.

Only remember this: my Executioner has been ordered to take your life at the appointed time."

"When will that be?", you cry in despair. "How much time do I have?" "Ah" answers the Accuser. "That is not for you to know.

It could be today.

It may be next week.

Perhaps not for 50 years.

You will not see the Executioner, but he will follow you at all times. You will never be out of his sight.

He will stand in the shadows and await the appointed moment. Then he will strike.”

Soon you find yourself standing alone on the sidewalk in front of your door. The time is exactly what it was when you met the strange guards. A friend comes down the street and bids you good morning. You smile and return the greeting but you are in a daze.

Was it a dream?

Was it a hallucination?

Or did it really happen?

Everything is the same as ever except that now you have the unshakable feeling that you are being followed by someone.

In a few weeks you become accustomed to this presence lurking behind you. You no longer turn around and try to see him. You're no longer afraid to open doors or go into dark rooms or walk down deserted streets.

You begin to laugh again and enjoy life almost as you did before, except that deep within is the knowledge that you are living under the sentence of death.

You know that some day, somewhere, the Executioner will step out of the shadows and strike.

***Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.***

***Hebrews 2:14-15***



When Adam and Eve lived in the Garden, they ate of the Tree of Life. They were alive in a way that humans today cannot experience.

**There was no shadow hanging over them.**

In the evening when the sun went down, they could sleep in perfect peace because tomorrow would be another glorious day. They had nothing to look forward to but new joy, new glory, in the garden of their heavenly Father.

But the day they ate of that forbidden tree everything changed.

Suddenly they saw that they were naked and covered themselves.

They were guilty and had to run and hide.

Soon they were cut off from God outside the Garden among the rocks and thorns of this insecure world that we know so well.



Worst of all, they were living under the sentence of death.

***"In the day that you eat the fruit thereof, you shall surely die."***

The Serpent who had been the Tempter was now the Accuser.

*"You've done it!*

*Now you're in my power, and you're going to die!*

*Soon you're going to die."*

They could till the soil, and herd their flocks, and raise their children, and build shelters to protect them from the cold winds. There were pleasures in eating, and drinking, and loving, and overcoming obstacles.

**But death reigned over them.**

They could no longer eat from the Tree of Life. The bright hope of another glorious tomorrow was marred by the ugly knowledge that tomorrow might never arrive.

When you and I were born into this world, we were born children of Adam. Before we know what it is to speak a word or make a decision, we already know what it is to be afraid.

What are we afraid of?

Why is a child frightened by a loud noise? Or a sudden unfamiliar jar?

Why does a child panic when it comes into the house and calls for its mother and there is no answer?

The fear behind all fears is the fear of that moment when the Executioner will materialize before us and strike the blow.

**The fear of death.**

The aged woman who cries from her sickbed, "O why doesn't God let me die?" may think she wants to die. But her whole being, tired and worn and sick as it is, is struggling for life.

Still running from the Executioner.

The young man who, in a fit of despair, puts a gun to his head and blows out his brains is not running away from life. He's beside himself like a man marooned on a single rock in the middle of an endless ocean. Death has surrounded him. The unseen Executioner has deprived him of all hope. And so, he gives himself up to the Executioner.

People don't realize what a grip their approaching death has on them. How the body, mind, and spirit shudder every time they are reminded that it's coming.

Death is not an event, something that happens when your heart stops and the fires of this body turn cold.

Death is a region that you enter when your body falls away and you step forth into a world with shadow but no substance.

A world where music is often replaced by the sound of weeping.

Where time can be filled with endless waiting.

Where the memory plays and re-plays and replays your past.

When the rich man in our Lord's parable entered the region of the dead, he was not unconscious.

He was very much awake.

He could see.

He could feel.

He could think.

He could speak.

***"I beseech thee father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am tormented in this flame!"***

Many years ago I was in a group of seven men on a weekend retreat. It was Saturday night. We had just got up from our knees after being drenched in an outpouring of the Holy Spirit with a force that none of us had ever known before. We were sitting in front of the fire in silence when finally one man got up, walked over and stood by the fireplace and said, "The biggest thing for me is that I know now – I know that I'm never going to die".

What a strange thing for him to say!

But I noticed that from that day that man, in his own quiet way, had power he didn't have before.

He was like a rock. He was filled with the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. So he knew he was never going to die. He would go on for a few more years. One day they would have a funeral for him and lay his body in the ground.

But this man will live forever, and so will you, and so will I, if the Spirit that lives in this man rules our lives.

***My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.***

***John 10***



It is true that Jesus came to preach good news to the poor, and heal the broken hearted, and bring release to the captives, and open the eyes of the blind.

But the chief reason for his coming, the chief reason for Jesus' presence with us as we read these words, is to raise us from the dead.

***“The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that hear shall live.”***

***John 5:25***



We don't have to live under the curse of the Accuser.

We don't have to live in dread of the Executioner.

**We can have life that no man and no devil can take from us.**

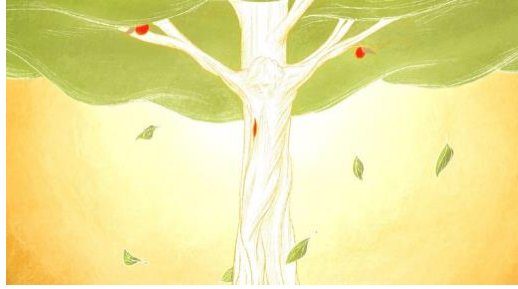
And when we have this life, we are free from the shadow of death and alive to God as never before.

**Because we are sustained by the Tree of Life.**

**We are eating its fruit.**

Where is that Tree of Life?

It's up there on Calvary.



**Its fruit is the broken body and the shed blood of the Son of God.**

***If anyone eats of this bread, they live forever.***

*"At the Cross, at the Cross, where I first saw the light, And the burden of my heart rolled away."*

The burden of our hearts is up there on the Cross!

He is dying our death.

He is destroying our Accuser.

***That through death, He might destroy him that has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.***

When Satan tells you, "You are going to die!" don't argue with him. Just point him to the Cross and he will shrivel up and disappear.

Of course we have to keep learning how to live all over again.

**To live like free men, free women.**

**And the way we learn to live is by keeping Jesus' words.**

***If a person keeps my saying, they will never see death.***

***John 8:51***

The power of the Holy Spirit operates in our lives day by day, hour by hour, not through some glorious experience we once had, but through *simple obedience to the words of Jesus right where we are.*

***"The words that I have spoken to you, they are Spirit and they are life."***

***John 6:63***

When Jesus says, "Love your enemies", and we obey out of love for him, his power surges through us and blesses our enemy as well as us.

When Jesus says, "Proclaim the gospel", and even though we're afraid, timid, self-conscious and tongue-tied, we do it out of love for him, the gospel rolls out of our mouths, a stream of living water.

Today, when we finish reading these words, we will go forth, either as victims of the unseen Executioner living in the shadow of death....

**or we will go as sons and daughters of God,**

**filled with the power of an endless life.**

The door to Everlasting Life is open and we may enter afresh even now. The door is none other than the outstretched arms of this man who raises the dead by dying for them, purges them with his own blood, and quickens them with his living word:



**Jesus.**

***Whoever has the Son has life, and whoever does not have the Son does not have life.***

***John 5:12***

Do we have this Son?

Are we walking with him?

It's time to cast out the Executioner who has followed us down the empty years filling our lives with dread, and draw near as never before to the risen Lord Jesus,

**who to know is life eternal,  
who to serve is unspeakable joy.**



*Prayer- Father, free us from the fear of this shadow that hangs over us. Free us from the accusations, the dread of the executioner. Deliver us from the fear of death, the bondage that keeps us from experiencing life and joy. Teach us to live in the freedom you call us to. Lord may we hear the voice of Jesus so we can be raised from the dead. Lead us to the tree of life, so we may freely eat its fruit. May we walk this life in simple obedience to your son, hearing believing and living his words, living these lives as the sons and daughters you meant us to be... filled with life and joy.  
Marantha Mirror*

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