

# *It Is Written*

*A weekly publication of the  
Junction Highway church of Christ in Kerrville, TX.  
Vol. 6                      February 25, 2024                      No. 8*

## **Death Is Yours!**

By Paul Earnhart

Solomon warns of the folly of building life on youth because it slips away like the morning mist and the once vital body turns frail and slips its earthly moorings (Ecclesiastes 11:9 to 12:7).

I remember my first intimate contact with death. As a young and largely untried gospel preacher, I was called to the bedside of an aged brother who was breathing out his last. In spite of my youthful inexperience his wife and daughter wanted me to share their painful vigil. Perhaps it was intended more for my good than theirs. James Wilson had not been “noted” among the saints. He was a man short of stature and quiet of way, but his way had been a godly life of reverent faithfulness and his wife and daughter shared his earnest faith. Their grief was quiet. He had prepared for this departure and was dying at home where he had lived and with those he loved around him. We sat and watched his already comatose body, the once ruddy skin now turned taunt and sallow. His daughter in some final gestures of love rose frequently to wipe away the cold sweat that formed on his motionless face. His shallow breathing became increasingly irregular until finally, with a few widely spaced gasps, he was gone.

As deaths go it was a quiet and gentle passing and yet there was nothing beautiful about it. There was beauty in the faith and character of this good man, but death at its best is ugly. The light just goes out of a face and body that once sparkled with vitality and love. And I have lived long enough to learn that not all die with such ease as brother Wilson. Often the body is so ravaged by disease or calamity that life ends amidst almost unbearable pain. Death may be many things to humankind but it is no friend!

Death is at the heart of that “vanity” to which God subjected the world (Romans 8:20) because of the rebellion of our first parents (Genesis 3:17–19). By one means or another, we are all headed for the dust.

Paul speaks plainly of death as “the last enemy that will be destroyed” by the triumphant Christ (I Corinthians 15:25–26). It is not something to be embraced but endured. By the power of Christ, death, like all other painful things, can become the instrument of blessing (Romans 8:28). Paul saw it, like life, as a means of magnifying Christ (Philippians 1:20).

But if death is an enemy, it is an enemy that has been disarmed in the risen Lord. That does not mean that God removes it (Hebrews 9:27) or extracts its pain and grief, but it does mean that death no longer holds us in terror (Hebrews 2:14–15) and that our grief is not hopeless (I Thessalonians 4:13). And this is true not because death has been transformed into something good and beautiful, but because it is a defeated enemy!

There are some remarkable statements in the New Testament that affirm this. Paul writes to the Corinthians that “All things are yours” and specifically mentions “death” (I Corinthians 3:21–22). Death cannot defeat us. In perhaps the most triumphant chapter in the New Testament the apostle writes confidently that “neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38–39).

Why is this true? Because He has promised never to leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5–6). This is what David knew when he wrote, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For you are with me ...” (Psalm 23:4). The “Light of the World” is not quenched by the

valley of the shadow and will be shining even there. The reason? He is the one who said, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore. I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore and have the keys of death and Hades” (Revelation 1:17–18).

Because of Jesus, death cannot steal our true treasure (Matthew 6:20). Our relationship with Him will transcend death (Romans 8:35) and nothing that we invest in the kingdom of God will be lost (I Corinthians 15:58). Every relationship in Him will be secure. And therefore, like Paul, we also stand unafraid beside our resplendent, risen Lord and hurl this taunt into death’s teeth: “O Death, where is your sting: O Hades, where is your victory?” (I Corinthians 15:55). Come and do your worst. The Lord we serve “has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (II Timothy 1:10). Even so. Amen.

## Where Self-Discipline Comes From

By Gary Henry

*“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* (Hebrews 12:1-2)

EVERY DAY WE LIVE IN THIS WORLD, WE ARE TESTED. We are faced with choices that test our character. Deep down inside, what kind of people are we? When the RIGHT THING and the EASY THING are not the same, we must choose between them. Do we have the character to do what we know best, and do that reliably and consistently. Are we made of strong stuff or not?

Most of us could use a little a little self-discipline and a little more will-power. We need the benefit of having trained our bodies to carry out the dictates of our conscience. Paul said, “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection.” (1 Corinthians 9:27) But how do we do this? Where does self-discipline come from?

SELF-DISCIPLINE COMES FROM HAVING HOPE THAT MEANS ENOUGH TO US THAT WE REFUSE TO GIVE UP. We find the strength to say “No” only when we have a powerful “Yes” burning within us. Like Jesus, who “for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross”, we must endure our own crosses. The “joy set before us “ is the key.

Actually, self-discipline is a form of COURAGE— and courage is always born of HOPE. When we can see the light that comes from the lighthouse, fear of the dark is lessened and we find the strength to make for the harbor. So John wrote, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope purifies himself, just as He is pure.” (I John 3:2-3)

If we are to grow strong in our character, therefore, and if we are to acquire godly integrity in our conduct—we must focus more on God. His glory means enough to us that the desire for Him to be glorified is a powerful force constantly calling us to higher ground. If God is to be glorified, there are some things that we must give up, it’s true. But the question is really one of GAINING things— GREATER THINGS THAT WE SHOULD REFUSE TO GIVE UP!

Our Lord did not ask us to give up things of the earth, but to exchange them for BETTER THINGS.