



You're  
Already  
Dead

by Aaron Koch



The spirituality of our culture is that you should always be positive and nice, and that even applies to the subject of death. “Celebration of life” sounds much nicer than “funeral.” Obituaries speak positively about the deceased “finding peace.” Our culture wants to talk about death as just another step in life’s journey, a natural and even beautiful transition to “a better place.” But these things are partial truths at best and are often based on false beliefs.

Scripture is honest about death in a way that is not positive or nice. It speaks of death as a curse. It says that death is not a friend but an adversary: “The last *enemy* to be destroyed is death” (1 COR. 15:26). Since this is so, it is best for us not to talk about death the way the world does — as if the human body God created is merely a container and that it’s good to escape the body into some purely spiritual existence.

### Not natural, not good

God did not create us to die but to live with Him, body and soul, forever. Death did not exist in the beginning; it entered God’s good creation through sin (ROM. 5:12). It is only because of the curse that body and soul get ripped apart. In spite of the world’s nice philosophies, death is still not natural or good. Losing loved ones still tears us up inside. The grave is still something we naturally fear. It is the thieving work of the devil to kill and destroy the life that God has given us (JOHN 10:10).

However, it is important to remember that the One who pronounced the curse of death is God Himself. He did this not only as the punishment for our sin but also as the way in which He would save us from our sin. *Death is instituted in view of the cross.* Instead of simply destroying

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man, God establishes death as the way of redeeming and restoring man through Jesus. The Lord turns this enemy of ours against itself and uses it as His instrument of salvation.

God speaks the curse of death in order that He might destroy the devil’s work through the death of His Son (1 JOHN 3:8). Since Jesus shared in our flesh and blood, His cross and resurrection crushed the devil who had enslaved us in fear

(HEB. 2:14–15). We are free. The curse is broken. Life is restored. Jesus lives!

### Death is put to death

Only in Christ can death be seen as a good thing, for He died our death for us. This is the gift that Baptism applies to us: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (ROM. 6:3). That means that Jesus’ atoning death counts for us! Death doesn’t get the last word over our bodies. “For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His” (ROM. 6:5).

As baptized Christians, you’ve already passed away. “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (COL. 3:3). The worst of it is over! The judgment part of death has been taken care of by Jesus. All that’s left now is the final putting to death of your sinful flesh so that you may rise again bodily to eternal life. “When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (COL. 3:4).

Through Jesus alone, we can face death without fear and even embrace it as a positive thing. St. Paul wrote: “To live is Christ, and to die is gain. ... My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better” (PHIL. 1:21, 23). We sing

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with Simeon, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation” (LUKE 2:29–30). Our funerals are celebrations of life *in Christ*. We find our peace only in Him.

By faith we’re not nice to death but mock it as the defeated enemy that it is. “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? ... Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 COR. 15:55, 57). LW



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