

## DEATH

### 1. Questions.

- a. Have you ever observed a child coming face to face with death for the first time? Was it an animal who died, or a human being?
- b. Contemporary people do not come into contact with death nearly as much as generations of the past. Do you think this impacts the way people view the world?
- c. Why doesn't God take us home as soon as we believe in Jesus?
- d. Are you afraid to die?
- e. If you had only two weeks to live, what would you do?
- f. When the certainty of your death finally breaks through, is there a way to face it without debilitating fear?

### 2. Definitions.

- a. Death means separation, not extinction.
- b. Death means *separation* in the Bible, never annihilation. Sin always results in alienation: theologically (between God and man), sociologically (between man and man), psychologically (between man and himself), and ecologically (between man and nature). We might also add, sexually (between men and women) and maritally (between husbands and wives).<sup>1</sup>
- c. Three kinds of death appear in Scripture: physical—separation of the body and soul (the material and immaterial parts of the person), spiritual—separation of the person and God, and eternal—permanent separation of the person and God.
- d. Physical death is the separation of one's soul from one's body.
- e. Spiritual death is existence apart from relationship with God.
- f. Positional death to sin....
  - (1) "Being joined to the death and resurrection of Christ is that which actually accomplishes our transference from the domain of the old life to that of the new life. Death to sin becomes, then, not a hope, but a reality, because Christ died to sin once and we were joined to Him in that death by baptism. Death means separation, not extinction. So death to sin in this paragraph means separation from its domain or realm, but not the extinction of its presence. Baptism means association or identification with someone or something. Here it refers to our identification with Christ in His death so that we have been separated from the power of sin. Baptism cannot refer here to a ceremony or even a sacrament, but rather to a relational union to the Lord (similar to the Israelites being relationally united to Moses in the crossing of the Red Sea, 1 Cor. 10:2). Ritual or water baptism illustrates this union but cannot accomplish it. Thus this baptism unites us to Christ's death unto sin (separation from its domain), to His burial (to demonstrate conclusively that His death was actual), and to His resurrection (to give us newness of life)."<sup>2</sup>
  - (2) Believers are "a-dead-to-sin-kind-of-people" (Ro 6:1-3).
- g. Second death is the lake of fire, where all unbelievers are destined for eternity.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Constable, *Notes on Genesis*, 60.

<sup>2</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 346.

### 3. Types.

### 4. Universality.

- a. “How disastrous for us is the continual remembrance of death which war enforces.”<sup>3</sup>

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow’r  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave,  
Awaits alike the inevitable hour;  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.<sup>4</sup>

### 5. Fear.

- a. “Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die.”<sup>5</sup>
- b. “There is no place for fear in the Christian life. The more things you surrender to fear, the more things you will fear. If you are afraid of dying then you are afraid of living.”<sup>6</sup>

### 6. Reason.

- a. Death is a consequence of sin.

### 7. Purpose.

- a. Death cures us of the delusion we are the centre of the universe or have ultimate control over our lives.
- b. “Death mocks every person’s claim to be God.”<sup>7</sup>

### 8. God’s Prerogative.

- a. We must say no to suicide and euthanasia.
- b. God is the one who decides the moment of our death.

### 9. Dying Grace.

- a. “Every person is immortal until his work on earth is done.”
- b. William Malone.
  - (1) “On 5 August 1915, Lt Col William Malone wrote his last words to his beloved wife Ida on the eve of the Chunuk Bair campaign on Gallipoli. Ida had travelled to Britain with their three small children to be nearer her husband. They hoped to meet on his next leave. Malone wrote two letters from Quinn’s Post – one at 8.10pm and one around 10pm. Over the next two days he would lead his men, the Wellington Infantry Battalion, eventually taking the New Zealanders’ objective, the summit of Chunuk Bair. Malone’s words are heartfelt and emotional, and

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<sup>3</sup> Uncle Screwtape, in C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Gray, “*Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.”

<sup>5</sup> Loretta Lynn.

<sup>6</sup> Joe Hunt, 29.

<sup>7</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 323.

reveal the loving husband and father behind the tough commander. The originals are now gone, but Malone's carbon copies remain and are held in the Alexander Turnbull Library. Extracts can be seen and heard in Te Papa's exhibition [Gallipoli: The scale of our war](#), including the following:

Quinn's Post, 8.10pm, 5/8/15

My sweetheart, in less than 2 hours, we move off to a valley, where we will be up all night and tomorrow in readiness for a big attack.... I expect to go through all right but, dear wife, if anything untoward happens to me, you must not grieve too much. There are our dear children to be brought up. You know how I love and have loved you, and we have had many years of great happiness together.

I am prepared for death, and hope God will have forgiven me all my sins.

My desire for life, so that I may see and be with you again, could not be greater, but I have only done what every man was bound to do in our country's need. It has been a great consolation to me that you approved my action. The sacrifice was really yours. May you be consoled and rewarded by our dear Lord.

Your loving husband,  
W. G. MALONE



Lieutenant Colonel William Malone, Gallipoli, 1915.  
Photographer unknown. Malone Family Collection,  
England.

## 10. Hope.

- a. "In my beginning [physical birth] is my end [physical death]; in my end [physical death] is my beginning [physical resurrection]."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> T. S. Eliot.

- b. “Make heaven the centrality of your preaching. We are not in the land of the living headed to the land of the dying. We are in the land of the dying headed to the land of the living.”<sup>9</sup>
- c. Death separates us from our mortal body so we can get our immortal body.

### 11. Defeat.

- a. Death seems to win every battle, but death will not win the war.
- b. Death is the final enemy to be conquered before Jesus turns over the kingdom to the Father.

### 12. Abnormality.

- a. “The Christian view of death—as of life—is very different from humanism’s. Death is a consequence of sin, and sin is ‘the sting of death’ (1 Cor. 15:56). The church has always rightly emphasized knowing how to die, but that does not make death a friend. In the absolute sense, there are no good deaths. Death is the enemy, the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26). The good-death people know nothing of life, have small regard for it, and embrace the enemy as if it were a friend. But in Christian perspective the only comfort in death comes from the assurance of resurrection.”<sup>10</sup>

### 13. Application.

- a. “Eternity is a long, long time. Compared to eternity, time is a drop in the bucket. Your finite mind cannot fully grasp the reality of time without end. You have only a few short years, perhaps less than you think, to prepare for life after death. Your life hangs by a very fine thread.”<sup>11</sup>
- b. Be buried, not cremated.
  - (1) Burial or cremation is the last statement you make in this life. For believers in Jesus, burial is highly appropriate. We are trinitarians who believe in bodily resurrection, not monists who believe in pantheism.
- c. When faced with death, immerse yourself in the Psalms.

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The New Testament writers commonly referred to death as “sleep” for the Christian, because his or her resurrection to life is a prominent revelation—and is sure (cf. Acts 7:60; 1 Cor. 15:6, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

A. W. Pink pointed out seven things that the figure of “sleep” suggests: (1) Sleep is perfectly harmless. (2) Sleep comes as a welcome relief after the sorrows and toils of the day. (3) In sleep we lie down to rise again. (4) Sleep is a time of rest. (5) Sleep shuts out the sorrows of life. (6) One reason perhaps why death is likened to a sleep is to emphasize the ease with which the Lord will quicken us. (7) Sleep is a time when the body is fitted for the duties of the morrow.

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<sup>9</sup> A Dallas Theological Seminary professor.

<sup>10</sup> Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 82.

<sup>11</sup> R. B. Thieme, Jr., “A Matter of Life and Death,” 14-15.

Church age believers are present with Jesus upon death as they await the first resurrection

“[T]he Romans burned their dead, the Christians buried theirs.”<sup>12</sup>

Many believers find their faith shaken or destroyed when they learn that they will die at a time and in a way that seems unfair to them.

Religious faith does not automatically provide solace in times of crisis.

Denial.

The cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker argued that the denial of death dominates our culture.

“We undertake all things as if we were establishing immortality for ourselves on earth. If we see a dead body, we may philosophize briefly about the fleeting nature of life, but the moment we turn away from the sight the thought of our own perpetuity remains fixed in our minds.”<sup>13</sup>

Death is an abstraction to us, something technically true but unimaginable as a personal reality.

Death is not nonexistence.

Atheists, agnostics, and secularists often develop beliefs about death they think will be comforting. But these beliefs often crumble when they’re confronted by the real thing.

“In the United States ... I encountered a society that seeks to avoid pain at all costs. Patients lived at a greater comfort level than any I had previously treated, but they seemed far less equipped to handle suffering and far more traumatized by it.”<sup>14</sup>

While humans have always struggled with the ways and justice of God, until quite recently no one had concluded that suffering made the existence of God implausible. For millennia, people held a strong belief in their own inadequacy or sinfulness, and did not hold the modern assumption that we all deserve a comfortable life. We have become so confident in our powers of logic that if we cannot imagine any good reason that suffering exists, we assume there can’t be one. But if there is a God great enough to merit your anger over the suffering you witness or endure, then there is a God great enough to have reasons for allowing it that you can’t detect. It is not logical to believe in an infinite God and still be convinced that you can tally the sums of good and evil as he does, or to grow angry that he doesn’t always see things your way. People say their suffering makes faith in God impossible

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<sup>12</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Brand.

—but it is in fact their overconfidence in themselves and their abilities that sets them up for anger, fear, and confusion.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Timothy Keller, “Growing My Faith in the Face of Death,” The Atlantic, March 8, 2021, referencing Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

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