

To Die Is Gain

Philippians 1:20 – 23

I. Intro

- A. Fear, common subject last year/half; popular statement – Faith without fear
- B. Ranked as 2nd highest fear of people – death; when people are afraid of something, they want to avoid it at all cost – but no one can avoid death
- C. **Illustration:** Mom's attitude towards death in her last days
- D. Apostle Paul saw death, not as something to be feared, but something to look forward to – death was a plus; for Paul death wasn't just about going to heaven, it was about going to Jesus
- E. [SLIDE] For believers in Christ, death is not about an end to existence, but death is about an eternal existence – about resurrection; and Paul believed resurrection was about relationship
- F. That aspect of discipleship has been forgotten; think of discipleship as learning, studying, growing into something – but first and foremost, discipleship is all about relationship; every area of discipleship is about relationship – including death
- G. Paul's words about death: **READ Philippians 1:20 – 23**

II. Fear of Death

- A. **Question:** Why do people fear death? Uncertainty – uncertainty of pain that may be experienced, uncertainty of what awaits on the other side of death, uncertainty of what the experience of death will be like, etc.
- B. Children afraid of the dark – they can't see, if something bad is about to happen they have no warning; same for adults when it comes to death
- C. Job questioned the experience of death: Job 14:10 (ESV)
10 But a man dies and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he?
- D. However, for some people their fear of death seems to be minimal; believe in some kind of existence (life) after death; but a strong case must be presented by those people who claim there is some type of afterlife
- E. Several weeks back, talked about how God has chosen us, He pursues after us – God knows us, God chose us, and God holds us; God has set this curiosity about eternity in our hearts; He wants us to be eager, enthusiastic for the next life, not anxious
- F. So, reason why many are fearful of death is because they've don't have any solid evidence of life beyond the grave – or, what they do believe about life after death is very shaky

G. [SLIDE] Good news if you are one of those today – God has given man the greatest piece of evidence to prove that death isn't something we need to fear; that evidence – resurrection of Jesus Christ

III. Evidence of Life after Death

- A. Many people claiming to have come back from the dead; popular book, movie “Heaven is for Real”; about a young boy claimed to have died, gone to heaven, seen family who have already passed on, even meeting a young girl who turned out to be a sibling he never knew because his mother had once had a miscarriage
- B. One thing that distinguishes Christ's return from dead from all other claims – Evidence; hundreds of witnesses who saw the physically resurrected Jesus; adding to that, the significant number of witnesses who actually saw Jesus die and be buried in a tomb beforehand
- C. Apostle Paul records this evidence in his letter to believers in Corinth – book of Corinthians in NT; public letter that was to be distributed and read by all the churches and early Christians that Paul oversaw and constantly kept check on
- D. **READ 1 Corinthians 15:5 – 8**
- E. Not only was this letter open to public to be read, but it was also subject to refuting – the facts given by Paul in it never were; consider that rock-solid evidence for several reasons: [SLIDE]
 - i. **1) Appearance of Jesus to more than 500 men (women were in addition to); if Jesus had only appeared to just a person or two, the claim would be no different than those claims of Big Foot or Loch Ness monster; Paul made it a point to say Jesus appeared to more than 500 men, and appeared to them at the same time – all at once; also, all those men were still alive, even at the time Paul wrote this letter – again, given ample opportunity for anyone to come forward and dispute his claim – no one did**
 - a) Acts 1:3 (ESV)

3 He [*Jesus*] presented himself alive to them [*His disciples*] after his suffering **by many proofs**, appearing to them **during forty days** and speaking about the kingdom of God.
 - b) Attempts made throughout history to prove Jesus is still dead – all have failed; if anything, more proof that Jesus rose from the dead and is still alive today
 - ii. **2) Relational purpose; last week talked about the whole purpose for our existence in this life is to have relationship with God, our Creator; relationship broken because of sin, but restored when Christ died on the cross; Christ's resurrection shows us that our relationship with God can continue after death**

- a) **Question:** If God so desires a relationship with us, why would He have that relationship end at the point of our death? Totally out of God's character
- F. God's ultimate relationship move, was sending His Spirit into the world and live in the hearts of those who have believed and trusted in His Son as Lord and Savior (more next week)
- G. No escaping reality that each and every day we spend in this life we're moving closer and closer into the afterlife
- H. But the resurrection of Jesus shatters any anxiety/fear about dying

IV. Close

- A. Said in opening, death is one of the greatest fears for most people; Paul said he looked forward to death and the next life – not just because he was going to be in heaven and not hell, but because of continuing in his relationship with Christ IN heaven that had just began for him on earth
- B. To Paul, it wasn't a theory, wasn't just mere hope, wasn't a religion, it was a reality
- C. **Question:** Hear any fear in Paul's words? – (v. 23)
23 ... My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.; or – (v. 21)
21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
- D. Everyday, as followers/disciples of Christ we need to live the words – Faith without fear – not just during a time of pandemic and uncertainty
- E. There is no reason to fear death because we have hope and evidence in Christ's resurrection and the reality of the relationship God desires to have with us
- F. **Question:** Why else would God have planted the thoughts/curiosity of eternity in our hearts?