

Essay #1:
Eagerly Await the Savior as You Prepare for Death

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“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,” St. Paul writes to the Philippian congregation (Phil. 3:20). The apostle speaks about our eternal abode. Heaven is the Kingdom of God, and the throne of God is there. A man can go to heaven in two ways. One of these ways is through death.

Death concludes the earthly journey of man. Sooner or later every man must face death. Death awaits everyone, no matter who they are on earth: a president or a king, a shepherd or a fisherman, a scientist or an actor, a man or a woman, an adult or a little child. The whole history of human civilization shows that all people are mortal. Death may be sudden and unexpected, or sometimes it comes as a result of a lingering illness and chronic suffering.

1. How death may be defined

What is to be understood by death?

Medicine attributes death to a malfunction or the termination of the activity of a certain organ of the human body: cerebral stroke, cardiac arrest, kidney failure, cirrhosis of the liver, etc. Philosophers take a general philosophical approach to this question. They call death the state opposite to life. So, in order to know what death is, one needs to know what life is.

Poets give a figurative definition of death. According to them, for example, death is the shore of the sea of vanity. We can mention other definitions of death, but all such definitions, which are given by men, don't provide any clarification and offer no help in facing and preparing for death. All such definitions of death express one thing, its inevitable and mysterious character, which instills fear in man throughout his life and can't bring him any comfort.

Only God in His Scriptures gives us an accurate picture of what death is.

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The first mention of death occurs already in Genesis 2. God warned Adam: “. . . *in the day that you eat from it you will surely die*” (Gen. 2:17 NAU). But when Adam disobeyed God, yielded to the temptation of Satan, and ate the fruit from the tree from which he should not have eaten, then his death, as it is usually understood by people, did not come immediately, as God had warned. Adam lived on, begat sons and daughters, saw many of his descendants, “and all the days that Adam lived on earth were nine hundred and thirty years” (Gen. 5:5).

Did not God’s warning to our first parents come true on that day? Actually Adam’s life changed immediately after the fall in the garden of Eden, when he ate the forbidden fruit, and changed quite drastically. He became a different man. Adam lost the image of God and the likeness of God, which he had had before the fall. Adam lost the intimate relationship he had with God because, as we are told, “*the Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden*” and “*he drove the man out*” (Gen. 3:23,24). Thus Adam was alienated from God through the fall into sin. Alienation, separation is death. The separation of a sinful man from God is spiritual death.

Therefore Adam became a dead man to God. St. Paul calls Gentiles dead in this sense when he addresses them in his epistles: “*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins . . . God, who is rich in mercy . . . made us alive*” (Eph. 2:1,4,5).

All succeeding generations became spiritually dead because of their sins, for “*through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners*” (Rom. 5:19).

If we go back to the events in the garden of Eden, we will see another result of Adam’s fall. “*By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return*” (Gen. 3:19). The Lord reminds Adam of his creation and announces to him the future consequence of his disobedience. These words of the Lord set limits to man’s life on earth. A man will live until he turns to dust, until he returns to the ground again. This is the death that is ordinarily called “physical,” however, we call it a “temporal” or “corporal” death because man’s body and soul are separated for a certain undetermined period of time.

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Man is a unique creation of the Lord because *“the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being”* (Gen. 2:7). The complex nature of man (body and soul) defines temporal death as separation of the soul from the body. This is clear from the words of God: *“Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee”* (KJV Lk 12:20), i.e., this very night you will die.

When a man dies, his body goes to the grave to turn into dust and wait for the day of the Final Judgment. *“And the dust returns to the ground it came from,”* we read in Ecclesiastes (Eccl. 12:7).

After the fall God told Adam about his death: *“dust you are and to dust you will return”* (Gen. 3:19). And since Adam begat children *“in his own likeness, after his image”* (Gen. 5:3), Adam’s descendants also were mortal. And this means that all men are *“destined to die once”* (Heb. 9:27).

Temporal, or corporal, death is not a complete annihilation of man, as Jehovah’s Witnesses and atheists believe. Temporal death is the deprivation of corporal life through the separation of the soul from the body. In other words, temporal death is not the last act of man’s existence. The Bible clearly states that after temporal death man faces two possibilities: either eternal life or eternal death.

What is eternal death? And when can it come?

Many Bible passages present the idea of eternal death. This will be *“everlasting punishment”* (Mat. 25:46). *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’”* (Mat. 25:41). These words present death as God’s eternal punishment. The Lord calls those who deserve such a punishment “cursed” and sends them into the eternal fire, where the devil and his angels will be tormented. The devil, an implacable and bitter enemy of the Lord, the author of our temptations, entices the world and opposes the divine cause. And the Lord sends those who turned away from God to their eternal destruction together with the devil. *“He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with*

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everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power” (2 Thes. 1:8,9). This is what St. Paul says about eternal death. One can also note that Scripture relates eternal death to the resurrection of the dead. *“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt”* (Dan. 12:2). Since eternal death will come with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will mete out justice in the Last Judgment to sinners who will not have come to the knowledge of God and will not have repented, the apostle John calls it the second death: *“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death”* (Rev. 21:8).

Thus the Scripture speaks of death on three levels:

- A. ***Spiritual death***: the separation of the sinner from God. The absence of spiritual life tells about a sinful life and a departure from a godly life. *“They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more”* (Eph. 4:18,19).
- B. ***Temporal death***: the separation of soul and body. *“When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust”* (Ps. 104:29).
- C. ***Eternal death***: the eternal separation of the sinner (soul and body) from God. Eternal death is the fate of the ungodly. *“But all sinners will be destroyed; the future of the wicked will be cut off”* (Ps. 37:38). Their bodies and souls will suffer eternal torments in the unquenchable fire.

2. The cause and purpose of death

At first sight the causes of death may appear to be natural: illness, accidents, natural disasters (tornados, floods, earthquakes), famine, wars, but Scripture reveals that the real cause of death is something else. God did not create man as a mortal being. Man became mortal because of sin. *“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and*

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in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). St. Paul summarizes the cause of man's death in the most concise expression: *"For the wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23). Death came to people as a result of sin: *"in Adam all die"* (1 Cor. 15:22).

In other words death is a response of the Lord to the disobedience of man in the garden of Eden. The Lord punished man with death. Just wrath is heard in the words of the Lord: *"to dust you will return"* (Gen. 3:19). Later, the prophet Ezekiel reminds the people of Israel of this truth: *"The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him"* (Ezek. 18:20). Luther wrote: *"Death is everlasting punishment by divine wrath, and death can not remove sin because it is cursed itself."* Therefore, for sinners death is retribution, a severe penalty which is imposed by God on a guilty man according to divine justice. *"You will die in your sin"* (Jn. 8:21), the Lord Jesus Christ said to the Jews who rejected him as their Savior during his earthly ministry, when he was fulfilling the will of his Heavenly Father. And man is unable to free himself from death as God's punishment. The will of God determines the length of a man's life. Therefore, when leaving this world, man has to acknowledge to God: *"My times are in your hands"* (Ps. 31:15). Man cannot avoid death; moreover, he cannot even know the day or the hour of his departure.

By subjecting guilty man to death the Lord intended to accomplish several purposes. We have already noted above that one of the purposes of death is to punish man for breaking God's commandment. For a wicked man death is a fulfillment of the horrifying warning: *"Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you"* (Ps. 73:27). But what does death mean for a believer? What does the approaching hour of death portend for a believer?

Death brings a number of blessings for believers:

- A. For the righteous, death can mean an escape from suffering, temptation, fear, terror, harm, and the dangers to which

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man is always exposed in our sinful world. Remember how downcast Job was when misfortune befell him: *“What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil”* (Job. 3:25,26). He even cried: *“Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?”* (Job. 3:11).

- B. Death allows the believer to get rid of the sinful flesh and shed the mortal body. *“I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable”* (1 Cor. 15:50).
- C. The death of a righteous man leads to a joyful resurrection. *“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life—”* (Dan. 12:2). *“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out— those who have done good will rise to live”* (Jn. 5:28,29). The death and resurrection of the believer testify to the infinite value of the Good News and the grace of God, which was revealed in the coming of the Son of God, Jesus Christ: *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”* (Jn. 10:10). Full life is life in heaven with God. This is eternal life, but it can come only after a believer’s death. This truth is confirmed by the incident with the thief who was crucified on the cross next to the Lord Jesus Christ. In the last minutes before his death the thief repented and confessed before the Lord. And the Lord Jesus Christ immediately answered: *“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise”* (Lk. 23:43). The thief came to faith, was justified, and entered paradise. But he did not escape death; he had to die before going to paradise.
- D. The Lord Jesus Christ suffered death on the cross. After the resurrection he ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of his heavenly Father *“at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty”* (Heb. 8:1). For a believer to suffer death on earth in order to rise again means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. All believers have to follow the path of Jesus Christ, the path which leads to the Kingdom of everlasting glory and delight in the presence of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul wrote about heaven: *“I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far”* (Phil. 1:23).

3. What happens to body and soul at death

Since man is a union of two elements: earthly and heavenly (body and soul), death, according to Scripture, manifests itself differently in these two elements.

Both the Old and New Testaments prove most conclusively that the death of a man on earth comes when his soul leaves the man, i.e. abandons his body.

When the only son of the widow of Zarephath became ill and died, the prophet Elijah stretched himself out on the boy and cried to the Lord: *“O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul come into him again!”* (KJV 1 Kings 17:21). The prophet clearly speaks about the soul of the boy. And he speaks about it as being absent from the lifeless body and prays for its return. The following words of the Scripture convince us of that completely: *“And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived”* (KJV 1 Kings 17:22).

We see that God does not create a new soul in order to bring the widow’s son back to life, but returns the same one into the lifeless body of the boy.

When the Lord Jesus Christ raised Jairus’ daughter, we read the same words: *“Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up”* (Lk. 8:55).

In the book of Acts we read about an occurrence when at night during Paul’s lengthy talk a young man named Eutychus sank into a deep sleep, fell to the ground from the third story, and *“was picked up dead”* (Acts 20:9). But the apostle Paul restored him to life. *“Paul fell on him and embracing him said, ‘Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him’”* (KJV Acts 20:10). The apostle asserted with confidence that the soul of Eutychus had returned to his body. At dawn *“the people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted”* (Acts 20:12). St. Paul testified that when the soul is in the body, a man is alive.

What happens to man’s body and soul after death? As the Lord said, the body turns into dust. *“Dust you are and to dust you will return”* (Gen. 3:19). The body has to return to the ground from which it was created.

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In the ground the body is subject to decay. It decomposes, becomes worm food, and slowly disintegrates. Although a dead body decays in the grave and turns into dust, it is not lost. The Scripture testifies about that: *“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God”* (Job 19:25,26).

These words tell us about the believer’s lot. Resurrection to glory awaits the believer’s body decaying in the grave. The flesh of a dead man will be restored. The bodies of believers will be raised to God’s glory, while the bodies of the wicked and the lawless will be raised for destruction in hell. *“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt”* (Dan. 12:2). The prophet Daniel heard the same prophecy about his destiny from the man clothed in linen: *“As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance”* (Dan. 12:13).

Thus, we see that the body does not disappear after death. Nor does the soul of a man, after his death. The soul will continue to exist. But how and where the soul will exist depends on where the soul of a man will be after he leaves this world.

As usual, the Scripture speaks about two possibilities, two destinies, two ways, two places where a man and his soul can go after death.

The believer’s soul will return to God. We can say this on the basis of the words of Ecclesiastes: *“And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it”* (12:7).

When dying on the cross, the Savior pronounced in a loud voice that he, the Son of God, commended his spirit to his heavenly Father: *“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”. When he had said this, he breathed his last”* (Lk. 23:46).

The death of the martyr Stephen also testifies that the believer’s soul goes to God. Hateful Jews were stoning him for the Word of God, and Stephen, feeling that death was near, prayed to God: *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”* (Acts 7:59). After that he passed away.

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The believer's soul remains with God. *"But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me"* (Ps. 49:15), says the psalmist, i.e., the soul of a righteous man will be with God.

And what does the Bible say about the unbeliever's soul? It suffers a different fate. The soul of a wicked man goes to hell. Here the example of the rich man, who lived in luxury every day and did not share with the poor, is often cited. When he died, the rich man found himself in hell *"where he was in torment"* (Lk. 16:23). *"The soul of the transgressors"* is evil (Prov. 13:2). But the Lord abhors evil. This means that the souls of the lawless will be alienated from God and will burn in the fire of hell.

4. The intermediate state of the soul between death and the Last Day

There must be an intermediate state of the soul between death and the Last Day because this is a time of waiting between the separation of the body and soul and the Judgment Day. This follows from the fact that the Judgment and full retribution will come after the second advent of Jesus Christ.

We already mentioned where souls go after death. According to Scripture there are only two places where the souls of the dead can be. They are either paradise, in heaven, where God dwells, or in hell, in Hades, the abode of the dead. Although the Roman Catholic Church introduces another abode for the souls of the dead, which is placed between hell and paradise and called purgatory, this idea has no scriptural basis. The teaching of purgatory is closely related to the teaching of salvation by works, which disparages and minimizes the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Therefore the doctrine of purgatory should be rejected as contradicting Holy Scripture and undermining faith in our Savior Jesus Christ.

What does the Scripture say about the state of souls in paradise?

They spend their waiting-time with God. The Scripture assures us that the souls of the godly are in God's hands. This is clear from the words of the Savior spoken in the last minutes of his suffering and addressed to the repentant thief: *"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise"* (Lk. 23:43). The

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Lord Jesus Christ says very explicitly: *“you will be with me in paradise.”* But to be with God means to be alive because *“he is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive”* (Lk. 20:38). When the Son of God prayed before going to the garden of Gethsemane, he spoke the words which show that the souls of the righteous dwell in paradise with Christ: *“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am”* (Jn. 17:24). Being with Christ makes the heavenly life of the souls of believers unspeakably happy for they are with God in the state of complete bliss and continuous delight. The apostle John testifies in the book of Revelation: *“Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on’”* (14:13). St. Paul maintains the same truth when he says: *“I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far”* (Phil. 1:23). According to Paul it is better to be with Christ than to be in the flesh in the sinful world. *“Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling”* (2 Cor. 5:1,2).

Enjoying blissful peace in the presence of Jesus Christ, the souls of believers wait for the just judgment. *“I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’”* (Rev. 6:9,10).

From what was said above about the souls dwelling in Paradise one can conclude that any teaching of a sleep of the soul that rules out the active enjoyment of fellowship with God should be classified with the teachings that don't reflect biblical truths.

The Scripture describes the state of the souls of unbelievers in a completely different way. We read that the souls of the wicked are *“the spirits in prison”* (1 Pet. 3:19), which are suffering agony and endless torment. The rich man, who had lived his life in luxury, found himself in hell. Being in torment, he saw Abraham far away and began to pray for mercy. *“So he called to him, Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire”* (Lk. 16:24).

The agony of the rich man in hell will be eternal because God revealed to us that between hell and Abraham's side such "*a great chasm has been fixed*" that nobody can cross it (Lk. 16:26).

5. The Christian's attitude in facing and preparing for death

Thus, death came into the world through man's fault and became inevitable. The lives of all people have one and the same end, death. The psalm of the sons of Korah speaks about the inevitability of death on earth: "*No payment is ever enough that he should live on forever and not see decay*" (Ps. 49:8,9). Death touches all.

God is the source of life, and he did not create man to die. Man was created for life with God; therefore death is repulsive and horrible to him. Usually, people don't want to remember death, refuse to speak about it, and try to avoid thinking about it. But this changes nothing at all in the earthly life of a man and only shows how great is man's fear in the face of his approaching death.

A man feels fear in the face of death because he feels the wrath of God in his conscience: "*The Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies*" (Nah. 1:2). The hour will come when man will have to give an account before the Most High, and man knows that he will not be able to stand before God: "*You alone are to be feared. Who can stand before you when you are angry?*" (Ps. 76:7). "*Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger?*" (Nah. 1:6). Man feels his absolute helplessness and inability to justify himself before God. The sinner has to acknowledge in despair: "*If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?*" (Ps. 130:3).

All people, including Christians, feel uneasiness and fear before the divine judgment and eternal death. St. Paul explains why Christians experience this fear before the coming death. "*But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin*" (Rom. 7:23,25). The apostle says that the Old

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Adam is still living in a believer. Therefore the fear of death is still present in the heart of a Christian: *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”* (Rom. 7:24).

Although Christians, like all people, worry and shudder at death, they have the hope and confidence to be calm and to face death without fear. Christians have what the wicked and lawless are deprived of. Christians have Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is their Savior, Mediator, and Intercessor before their Heavenly Father. Christians have faith in Jesus Christ, the(ir) Lord and Savior, which makes their expectation of death entirely different from that of the wicked.

1. As he prepares for death, the Christian knows that Jesus has removed the “sting of death,” sin, by his obedient life and his atoning death. Man cannot get rid of sin, the cause of death, by himself. Nor can he do it with the help of others. No man can help him with this. *“No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him—the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough”* (Ps. 49:7,8).

Only the Lord, moved by his grace, could redeem the world by sacrificing his only begotten Son Jesus Christ for the sins of the whole world. *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Cor. 5:21). Christians *“know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that they were redeemed from the empty way of life—but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect”* (1 Pet. 1:18,19). By his sacrifice the Son of God fulfilled the will of his Heavenly Father and conquered death for all men by freeing them from sin.

2. As he prepares for death, the Christian knows that since he was saved from sin and became innocent before God, he is exempt from the Final Judgment. *“Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me—will not be condemned,”* said Jesus Christ (Jn. 5:24). While the wicked can’t avoid the righteous judgment of God, the redeemed children of God don’t face the prospect of the Judgment. By his suffering and death the Son of God freed them from their guilt and removed their transgressions forever. *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Rom. 8:1).

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3. As he prepares for death, the Christian knows that *“he has already passed from death to life”* (1 Jn. 5:24). John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord, preached: *“Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him”* (Jn. 3:36b). The fate of the believer is entirely different: *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life”* (Jn. 3:36a). A little later the disciples of Jesus Christ heard this Gospel message: *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life”* (Jn. 5:24). Jesus does not say that the believer will pass from death to life soon or some time after death, but that he has already *“crossed over from death to life.”* He has passed from darkness to light, from lie to truth, from unbelief to faith, from a sinful, ungodly, meaningless life to a holy, blessed, eternal life with God.

4. As he prepares for death, the Christian knows that his approaching death is but a sleep from which the Lord Jesus himself will awaken him. We know that from the story that took place in the village of Bethany, where Lazarus lived and died. When the Lord Jesus learned about his death, he said: *“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up”* (Jn. 11:11). Jesus Christ could only call a believer *“our friend.”* *“Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, Lazarus is dead”* (Jn. 11:13,14). Lazarus was in the grave four days, but the omnipotent Lord Jesus raised him by His power. Lazarus came back to life as if he woke from a sleep. And this will be the case with every believer because the Lord assures us that it is true: *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die”* (Jn. 11:25,26).

5. As he prepares for death, the Christian knows that death has been completely vanquished. What happened on Golgotha, when Jesus Christ was crucified and, after that, when Jesus Christ appeared alive before many, convinces us that he overcame death and conquered it forever. On Good Friday Jerusalem witnessed the painful and disgraceful death of Jesus Christ. But two days later, on the third day, the Son of God rose from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a clear and

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obvious proof of his victory over death. *“God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him”* (Acts 2:24). What was fulfilled on Golgotha had been predicted hundreds of years before it happened. Isaiah had prophesied: *“On this mountain the Lord Almighty will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever”* (Is. 25:5,7,8).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ and his life after death testify that death is vanquished. St. Paul had every reason to say: *“Since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him”* (Rom. 6:9). Christ lives and *“cannot die again.”* Therefore he who lives in Christ Jesus does not die, but lives with him.

6. As he prepares for death, the Christian knows that Christ will raise him from death to eternal life. The Lord Jesus spoke about the resurrection of believers very explicitly. He gives glorious promises to the believers, who were given to the Son by the Father. *“And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day”* (Jn. 6:39,40). St. Paul repeats the same promises to the Corinthians: *“In Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him”* (1 Cor. 15:22,23). And other Bible passages also tell us that resurrection awaits believers after death: *“the dead will be raised imperishable”* (1 Cor. 15:52); *“and the dead in Christ will rise first”* (1 Thes. 4:16). As we see, in the face of death, Christians have every reason to trust in the promises of our Lord Jesus, which bring the joy and comfort of the future life.

To summarize the above-said:

Although Christians are restored to a new, holy life, the Old Adam is still living and acting in them. He brings uneasiness and the fear of death into the life of believers. We are afraid of losing our loved ones and intimate friends. We fear the pain and misery that we have to suffer when death comes. But this

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fear is overcome by faith in the saving love of God, which is described in very simple words: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (Jn. 3:16). The love of God saves from destruction.

When the Christian begins to feel the fear of death, he can remove it because he always has true and reliable protection. He has the Savior Jesus Christ. When death begins to frighten and terrify him, the Christian knows to whom he can turn and in whom he can put his hope. He can confidently rely on his Savior who has conquered death for him. The Son of God told his disciples: *“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”* (Jn. 16:33). His victory over death is our victory. Therefore the Christian calmly prepares to face the hour of his death by looking to Jesus and contemplating his work of redemption, which is fully completed, and by trusting in his promises.

Let death terrify the wicked and the lawless who rejected the Son of God; we Christians should not be afraid of death and depressed by it because we are the redeemed children of God. We are redeemed to God by the righteous blood of Jesus Christ. The price of our redemption is high. Jesus Christ saved us from sin, defeated death, and gave us eternal life. *“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand”* (Jn. 10:28,29). We know that we are in safe hands, the hands of God. We have nothing to fear. Whatever fear and terror we have to feel before death, all the earthly sufferings of Christians *“are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us in heaven”* (Rom. 8:18). Let not death frighten and terrify us; we have the Good news. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to suffer and die *“so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death”* (Heb. 2:14,15). The Son of God has fulfilled the will of his Father, *“has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”* (1 Tim. 1:10).

Listening to the Good News and trusting in it, we can boldly and confidently say together with St. Paul: *“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus*

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Christ" (Phil. 3:20). We can say that. And we do say that because death no longer terrifies us: we are saved and we are the children of God. And we eagerly await the coming of Jesus Christ, for he is our Savior and he will deliver us from death completely.



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