

“To live is Christ and to die is gain”

INTRODUCTION:

- So many times we **take the Hope** we have in Christ for **granted**.
- There is hope and comfort in Christ’s resurrection and His second coming, therefore we do not mourn like the unbeliever.
- This is not so with all men. I’ve seen people in the grip of death, with deathly fear.
- Fear dominates the deathbed of the unbeliever. My prayer is that we would come to a place of deep thanksgiving for the peace and comfort that comes when we are protected by the blood of the Lamb of God and made righteous by His blood.
- We are restored to God. He has made a way open for us. “Come boldly before the throne of grace.”
- Praise to God for a Living Hope - **1 Peter 1:3-4** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

1 Corinthians 15

54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”^[1]

***55 “Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?”^[1]***

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

While we were living in South Korea a few years ago, we went on a mission trip to India. It was an experience of a lifetime. On the last day of the Mission Trip Missionary Kim took the team to the Kali temple in Kolkata. Kali is the Hindu goddess of destruction and death. She is venerated as the goddess of death and Hindus will try and undertake a pilgrimage to this temple before they die. To worship Kali, but also to sacrifice a goat. To spill blood as a sacrifice before they die. Whether the blood is perceived as a medium to cleanse from sin or a peace offering to Kali (the goddess of death) to appease her, before they meet her, is unclear.

I was standing before in the doorway of the sacrificial chamber, where they were preparing a small goat to be sacrificed. I saw a man standing by the wooden posts, where the goat’s head will be placed, saying a prayer to the demon Kali. Also I saw an individual pouring coconut milk on a heap of crushed flowers and incense, mixed with goat’s blood. After the man finished his prayer as the wooden posts they killed the goat, by chopping of its head. It was quite gruesome. The goat’s head was taken by the man doing the killing and he anointed the foreheads of a few devotees present. The rest of the goat’s blood was mixed with water and poured into a channel that flowed through the temple. I saw the blood and water flowing through the temple as we were walking through the temple.

As I was beholding all of this the Lord spoke. As I saw the man praying and the goat’s blood being applied to the foreheads of the devotees, the Lord said: “They do these things out of fear. The hope is that this will be sufficient, enough, in the hour of darkness, when they pass on.” Even in their delusion these individuals recognized that something has to be done. A sacrifice is needed, blood needs to flow before stepping over the threshold of death. In desperate fear of the unknown, death, the religious Hindu gropes for anything and everything that might save or relief from the gripping fear

of the unknown/death. These Hindu devils deceive millions by their lies. Deceive the masses into accepting anything, but the truth. The truth being, that there's nothing but the flowing blood of one that saves from sin. Only One's blood can save from the second death and bring unknowable peace.

Throughout human history the fear of death has been coped with in different ways. The Egyptian pharos built massive tombs and took great treasure with them into their tombs, in the belief and hope that these measures would prepare and equip them to face the unknowable darkness. We see the same kind of extravagant measures taken by Chinese Emperors. Building massive tomb complexes with thousands of terracotta chariots and soldiers, in the delusion of being ready for the death's embrace. From grand stone mausoleums to the spilling of animal blood, man has tried to prepare himself/herself for the ultimate enigma that is death. With familiar spirits and outright devils misleading mankind away from the One Lamb that takes away the sin of the world.

The atheist is not exempt from this fear. Even though naturalists like Richard Dawkins and the late Christopher Hitchens look at these religious preparations for death as backward and primitive, the naturalist prepares for the enigma of death in a different way. Welcome to the world of transhumanism. An increasing amount of people, well to do people and scientist (not hippies) from all walks of life – from the military, natural sciences to engineers, believe that it is within the power of man and even the right of man to utilize technology to attain immortality of consciousness. In other words using technology to live forever. This sounds like science fiction, but there are big names out there pouring billions of dollars into this movement.

Theories range from transferring consciousness to computers to rewriting the human genetic code.

In 2013 The Academy of Medical Science in Britain admits that human DNA and animal DNA have been spliced. "More than 155 'admixed' embryos, containing both human and animal genetic material, have been created since the introduction of the 2008 Human Fertilization Embryology Act."

In 2014 the Brookings Institute in the United States (one of the biggest policy think tanks in the world) said that the US Constitution will have to be amended in the near future to extend Bill of Rights privileges to human non-humans. These are humans that have been genetically modified to such an extent as not to be considered human anymore.

So whether it be grand pyramid graves, filled with riches or the identification and eliminating of the aging gene within the genetic code, the driving force is the same: The fear of death. The fear of unpreparedness the fear of the unknown. The ever-present fear or awareness that when the veil to the spiritual realm part the individual is left to the mercy of cosmic forces far greater and more powerful than the individual's spirit. Thus, anything and everything that might prepare one for the great enigma of death or at least delay death is fervently sought after. For the religious it takes on the form of religious duty and ritual, for the naturalist it takes on the form immortality through scientific development.

John 14:27- Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

We take the peace and love that we've found before the cross and the empty tomb for granted. Our God can be described by words such as 'compassionate', 'gracious', 'kind', 'loving', 'forgiving', 'just'. In the Greek there is a word that describes God *σπλαγγίζομαι*

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Islam:

...but they (the Jews) were deceptive, and Allah was deceptive, for Allah is the best of deceivers Surah 3:54; cf. 8:30

The following was written about Abu Bakr, one of Muhammed's closest followers:

“Although he had such a faith, which was too great to suffice all the inhabitants of the earth, he was afraid that his heart might go astray. So, he used to utter, while weeping: ‘Would that I have been a bitten tree!’ Whenever he was reminded of his position in Allah’s sight, he would say: ‘By Allah! I would not rest assured and feel safe from the deception of Allah (la amanu limakr Allah), even if I had one foot in paradise.’”

Hinduism (Kali):

Ramprasad a devout follower of Kali (the Hindu goddess of death) who live in the 17 hundreds, wrote the following about the demon Kali:

Can mercy be found in the heart of her who was born of the stone?

Were she not merciless, would she kick the breast of her lord?

Men call you merciful, but there is no trace of mercy in you, Mother.

You have cut off the heads of the children of others, and these you wear as a garland around your neck.

It matters not how much I call you "Mother, Mother." You hear me, but you will not listen.

Whether it be the gods of Hinduism, Allah, Gilgamesh, the Babylonian nature gods or the Greek-Roman gods on Olympus. One thing that is missing from all of these are the attributes of love, grace and suffering on behalf of their children. It is only by the feet of our Lord that we find peace, true love and redemption and acceptance.

Romans 8:35-39 - Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Pluralism = The popular answer to death

Christian Humanists like Desmond Tutu makes the argument that there must be many ways to God, because your faith and belief system is based on where you were born. This viewpoint holds that a good Buddhists will see salvation, because he walked the path that was revealed to him. He/She never new Christ, and it would therefore be ‘unfair’ to condemn this Buddhist to hell.

This is what we call ‘pluralism’. We are all ascending the mountain, just by different paths. All the paths lead to the top – to God. [What happens to unbelievers, children and babies that die without the knowledge of Christ, is a discussion for another time] Pluralism is another popular ‘coping mechanism’ to deal with the fear of death. Departing from the revealed truth of God, and accepting an easier truth that fits the secular humanist’ paradigm.

Nothing but the Blood of Jesus

God's revealed truth. Tells us that there is only One Who's blood is sufficient to safeguard our journey from this life to the next. When we cross the threshold of death, there is only One Who can save us. There is literal power in His blood. Exorcist testify of demonic forces shrieking, when the blood of Christ is applied. Many believers have found that healing and protection comes from praying the blood of Jesus over oneself.

The blood of the Lamb literally protects from death. We see this in the Bible.

Exodus 12:13 - The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

The blood of the Passover the lamb was of course a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ – Our Savior, Our Passover Lamb. By Whose blood we are protected and sealed. Death do not intimidate or evoke fear in us. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew letter for 'mark/sign' is the letter TAV. The TAV being a 't' shaped letter. However for the ancient Israelites the letter was not shaped as like a 't'. It was shaped like a cross. Interesting that the only thing that protected the Israelites in Egypt from death was the blood of the Passover lamb. Applied to the door frames in the shape of crosses.

1 Corinthians

⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory?
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⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Deathbed

The deathbed of the unbeliever and the deathbed of the believer is radically different. It is at the end of one's life that all pretense and masks fall away. For the unbeliever a time of fear and anguish.

Voltaire, one of history's best known atheists, often stated that "by the time I'm buried, the Bible will be non-existent." His last words were: "I am abandoned by God and man; I shall die and go to hell alone." His condition had become so terrible that his associates were afraid to approach his bedside, and as he passed away, his nurse said that for all of the wealth in Europe, she would never watch another infidel die.

Brown : " Devils are in the room dragging my soul to hell"

However, for the believer the deathbed is a time of rejoicing. The race is finished, what is left is for us to see our Lord face to face.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon: "I can hear them coming!" He sat straight up in bed and asked: "Don't you hear them? This is my coronation day. I can see the chariots, I'm ready to board."

Dwight L. Moody, famous preacher and founder of the Moody Bible Institute, while on his deathbed: "Can this be death? Why it is better than living! Earth is receding, heaven is opening. This is my coronation day"

Dietrich Bonhoeffer - This is the end—for me the beginning of life

Whose Blood do you Have on your doorposts?

I want to finish with this question. Who's blood do you have on your doorposts? Is it the blood of goats? Like I saw in the Kali temple. Is it the blood of human progress and immortality? Or is it the blood of the One True Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the World?

While leaving the Kali Temple in Kolkata I saw something that shook me to my core. Next to this temple, where thousands of goats are slaughtered, to escape the fear of death, is the image of One True Sacrifice. He that is the only sufficient sacrifice for the sin of men. I saw the following, and almost wept.

May we appreciate His sacrifice. May He give us a willingness and to abandon our own wants, to proclaim the "Good News". The News that brings peace, when death is at the door.