

How Should We Perceive Death?

Byron Norrod—January 27, 2024

I'd like to just start off with a small eulogy for William Pierce. Bill Pierce was a good guy, originally from Columbus, Ohio, and he was 85-years-old, and On October 22nd he died.

We really miss Bill because he left such a good example, and I'll cite some of the example that he left. It was neat because when he went into the nursing home, he didn't want to be over close to his daughter. He wanted to be close to his people in the Church, to be close to CBCG and be able to attend services so that the brethren could visit him. It was really nice.

Bill was funny. He said that, he said, 'Well, you don't always have to call me Bill, you can call me Bob because I go by both.' So I always made it a point to call him Bill one time and then Bob the next, and he loved it. It was great. That was his kind of thing. So it was a fun thing. He had a good sense of humor and he always wanted to bring some levity to wherever he was. He is survived by three adult children and six grandchildren and extended family.

But he left a great example. His roommate at the nursing home was an atheist. But Bob would talk to him over and over again about his relationship with God and fulfilled prophecy and things that he saw and the things that he understood. By the time that Bill died, the man is no longer an atheist.

He had such a witness that the man is now fully on board and wants a Christian connection. He believes the Bible and he's starting to read, and that's amazing!

When Bill at the very last went to the hospital, this man was really hoping that Bill was going to come back. He told Paula, Bill's daughter says, 'I want to make sure that he understands how much he meant to me because he's changed my life.' She said, 'I was touched by that.'

He wrote Bill a four-page letter telling Bill what a difference he had made in his life. Not only that, but a lot of the people who were there, Bill would go and just talk to them. He had a hard time hearing, and he would say, 'What's that? Say that again.'

He didn't understand everything that was going on. But he would still talk to people about God and the Truth. He left a legacy of Godliness and humor.

It's interesting that people were drawn to him and a lot of people asked about him. His male nurse, Arnel a Filipino guy, and loved talking to

Bill. He told Paula, 'He's my favorite; I always love coming into this room. He's always a positive guy.'

The head of nursing, the director of nurses also told Paula that they always looked forward to him and they kept wanting to vote him as being the head of the patients. They had a little group there so that he could report to the nursing staff, because he was so nice, friendly, loving, kind and honorable. They believed him to be true!

What do we see about Bill? Bill left us a legacy; it's what people remembered about him when we're talking about him and reminiscing about him. It's the fruit that he produced. What I'm talking about is *death*.

- How do we see death?
- How should we see death?
- How should we look at death?
- How does God look at death?

Today we'll be looking at in the Bible a few points because there's so much about death in the Bible. However, I think there's some key issues that we need to focus on to understand what God's perspective is.

But first, we have to realize that the world is so confused about death. Halloween, October 31st is the Day of the Dead, and it's where they have this misconstrued idea that the dead can help us somehow. How could that be a benefit?

There's even a whole religion dedicated to ancestor worship. And not only that, listen, we're in the end-times as far as I can tell, and there's going to be so much more death already.

I'll just mention this in passing. I really fully understand where we believe we are and where we believe that we are not when it comes to the end time prophecy.

Rev. 9:14 and 16:14 both talk about the Euphrates River drying up. It's been in the news now for a long time. There's a number of—and I was surprised to see this YouTube videos saying, 'Is this a prophecy being fulfilled?' *It's not, yet!*

Rev. 16 is just before Armageddon and then the 6th trumpet for Rev. 9. What it is in Rev. 9, it says that there the four demons that were bound for this time would kill a third of humanity, *a third!*

If we're at 9-billion people, that means 3-billion people will perish. We're going to be. We have to have a proper perspective. The Euphrates is *drying* up. It's not *dried* up. So it's not a direct

fulfillment of those things, but it could be a precursor. It could be a pre-awareness or a precursor that would happen in advance of the fulfillment of it.

But let's look at what the Bible says about this.

1. We need not Fear Death

Psalm 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me..."

That's the first point that I'll be making after this introduction is that *we need not fear death!*

Ezekiel 33:11: "... 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no delight in the death of the wicked...'"

God doesn't want to kill people, but He is going to punish for evil, for sinfulness. How should we look at death?

Philippians 1:20: "According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in no way shall I be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, Christ shall also be magnified now in my body, whether by life or by death."

Paul is saying, 'My focus is that I'm going to live to Christ, and either by my living or in my dying. I want it all to be towards Christ.

Verse 21: "For to me to live *is* Christ...[that's the whole reason for my purpose of living] ...and to die *is* gain." ***How is it that death can be a gain?***

Revelation 21:4: "And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and *there* shall not be anymore death, or sorrow, or crying; neither shall *there* be any more pain..."

We don't have to fear the unknown of what death is. We don't have to be scared of dying; yet, that's the common thing.

1-Corinthians 2:9: "But according as it is written, '*The eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*'"

God's got such an amazing hope and a promise of what He's going to provide for us. So, for us to die can be gain, Because we no longer have to fight the struggles and the trials of this world.

But what do we do with people whom we've lost? *We miss them!* It says that the dead know nothing, but in our mind we miss those people whom we lost.

Our mothers, our fathers, our sisters, our brothers, our children, our animals. If we lose a dog or a cat that we've hung on to for a long time, that's

a hole in our heart! But it's not over. That's the beautiful thing is that we don't have to look at the negativity of it.

We're sad because we miss them. If we bring it down to the basic factors of it, it's selfishness. We miss them. We don't get to see them anymore. There's a finality. We don't have that contact. We can't ever talked to them again. So, we might be sad. We might be upset about that, and that's unfortunate for us.

But they no longer have to struggle in the flesh; that's a real benefit.

2. We're to Bear Fruit

Romans 7:1—*Paul says*: "Are you ignorant, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know law) that the Law rules over a man **for as long a time as he may live?**"

Then he uses the analogy of being married and the marriage concept (vs 2-4). He's saying that you're bound to in marriage to your mate for as long as you live, with certain few exceptions that Christ outlined, not for every cause, not for every reason. But there are times when a person can have the marriage dissolve.

But Paul uses that analogy for the fruit analogy that he's been expounding on in Rom. 6-8. We're going to look at those things.

Verse 4: "In the same way, my brethren, you also were made dead... [we're talking about death here] ... to the *marriage law of the Old Covenant*... [talking about our covenant] ...by the Body of Christ in order for you to be married to another..."

What's He saying? The God of the Old Testament died because Israel continued to live. There is a divorcing and Israel was not allowed to marry another as long as the Creator was alive.

So, He came to this earth to be the sacrifice for us all. When He died, that ended that old marriage covenant. Now we're free to marry Jesus Christ ***in the spiritual realm at the resurrection*** of the firstfruits.

"...you also were made dead to the *marriage law of the Old Covenant* by the Body of Christ in order for you to be married to another... [Jesus Christ] ...Who was raised from *the* dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God" (v 4).

Paul talks about fruit all through Rom. 5-8, and he compares and contrasts against two ways of life. We have the wrong way of life that is sin and:

- leads to
- is the produce of
- the yield of

- the fruit

which "...the wages of sin is death..." (Rom 6:23). We know that. There's the righteous way when we produce positive fruit and leads us to life. That is the law of life.

When we are living the Righteousness and the Law, that leads to a yield of *life everlasting!*

Romans 6:3—*Paul begins to compare and contrast*: "Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried..." (vs 3-4).

We want to keep that old man down.

Verse 6: "Knowing this, that our old man... [who we want to keep buried] ...was co-crucified with *Him* in order that the body of sin might be destroyed... [we want to put that down] ...so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin... [contrast]: ...because the one who has died *to sin* has been justified from sin" (vs 6-7).

Verse 13: "Likewise, do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin; **rather**, yield yourselves to God... [rather is a compare and contrast word; don't do the wrong, do the good] ...as those who are alive from *the* dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God."

We have a choice. We can be either instruments of unrighteousness to sin *or* instruments of righteousness to God.

Verse 16: "Don't you realize that to whom you yield yourselves *as* servants to obey... [the negative] ...you are servants of the one you obey, whether *it is* of sin unto death, **or**... [contrast word] ...of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks *be* to God, that you **were** *the* servants of sin, but... [contrast word] ...you have obeyed from *the* heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you; and having been delivered from sin, you became *the* servants of righteousness. I speak from a human point of view because of the weakness of your flesh; for just as you *once* yielded your members in bondage to uncleanness, and to lawlessness unto lawlessness..." (vs 16-19).

So, our sin only begat sin. The more lawless we were, the more sinful we became.

"...so now... [contrast] ...yield your members in bondage to righteousness unto sanctification" (v 19).

Now he finally says the word. He's just been giving the comparative contrast. But:

Verse 21: "Therefore, what fruit did you have then in the *things* of which you are now ashamed?... [that's the bad, the negative] ...For the

end result of those things *is* death."

He's going to say it overtly in just a second.; the wages of sin is death. But he's saying:

- the end result
- the wages of sin
- the law of sin that he covers in Rom. 7
- the yield of sin
- the therefore of sin
- the produce of sin

is death! The end result of those things is death.

Verse 22: "But... [contrast] ...now *that* you have been delivered from sin and have become servants of God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end result... [the yield, the therefore] ...*is* eternal life."

The end result, the yield, is eternal life! Isn't that amazing?

Verse 23: "For the wages of sin *is* death..."—*the negative, compare and contrast!*

The law of sin is that we have to sin. We need a Deliverer, a Savior! Without Jesus Christ as our Savior, we have no deliverance! The yield of that will be death!

"...but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" (v 23).

Romans 7:4—Paul showed us the fruit: "...Who was raised from *the* dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God"—*that's the positive!*

Look at the negative contrast in v 5: "For as long as we were in the flesh, the passions of sins, which *were* through the law, were working within our own members to bring forth fruit unto death."

Rom. 7:13-25 talks all about the law of sin, which just simply means that we have a carnal nature, and we will sin, we must sin. If we did not sin, we would not need a Savior. But God mandated that all men sin, since Adam (Rom. 5:12) that all sin entered into all mankind, and thus all men must sin, and thus we must have a Savior. *That's a beautiful thing!*

Rom. 8:2 compares the Law of the Spirit, which yields to life *vs* the law of death, the law of sin, which yields death. But then we see it in vs 4-9. It contrasts the carnal mind, and it tells us clearly that carnal mind is 'enmity, for it's not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.'

Verse 9: "However... [contrast] ...you are not in *the* flesh, but in *the* Spirit..."

In vs 10, 13, 15, it's just amazing

- How do we produce this fruit?

- What is the good fruit that we're supposed to produce?

John 15 says that we have to stay connected to the Vine—Jesus Christ—then

- we can stay and be
- we can produce righteousness
- we can be righteous
- we can think righteousness
- we can do righteousness
- we can reflect Godly love

Luke 3:8—*John the Baptist told the multitudes:* “Therefore, bring forth fruits worthy of repentance ...”

The first thing, the first point was we don't have to fear death. The second is we're supposed to produce fruits, and that the fruits that we yield should be positive, and it should be uplifting towards righteousness.

3. Hope

We need to have the hope that God provides. John 11:25 is an incredible Scripture of hopefulness that Jesus gives to us.

John 11:25: “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life...’”

- we have a hope in life eternal
- we have a hope in the resurrection to come

“...He who believes in Me, though he die, shall live again” (v 25). *Amazing!*

- if we die, it's not over
- if we die, there's hope
- if we die, there's salvation
- if we die, there's a resurrection of the dead

We can look at death as a stepping stone unto eternal life, and we should see it as such.

1-Corinthians. 15:51: “Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all fall asleep...”

By the way, God uses sleep as an analogy or a metaphor for death over 50 times in the Bible. How does God look at death? *God sees it as a temporary cessation!* It's just that we're put on pause. We flick the light switch. The light switch is off for a little bit, and then He's going to flick the light switch back on. ***Death is nothing to fear!***

“...but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal must put on immortality. Now, when this corruptible... [this earthly coil that eventually will

shuffle off this tent, this tabernacle] ... shall have put on incorruptibility... [the upward movement; the righteousness, the goodness] ...and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’” (vs 51-54).

Jesus Christ is our Victory. What was it that we read in Philippians where it says ‘to live is Christ and then to die is gain’? *We have gain because we die!* What a blessing and a benefit. We have hope in the resurrection. Listen, ***spiritual death is what we should fear!*** Spiritual death is:

- no legacy
- no positive remembrance
- no positive fruit
- no positive yield

It's a permanent separation from God! Spiritual death is ***the second death***, and we want no part of that. ***We should fear that!***

But our physical death is nothing that we have to be worried about. This death of this life is simply ***a stepping stone to eternal life where we can be eternally with the Creator!***

How should we look at death? The Bible tells us, and I've brought four three points, and I'm sure that there's so much more that you could add to it. But I want this totally to be helpful and positive and looking forward to what God promises us.

- 1) we don't have to fear; no fear of death
- 2) we should produce fruit, and that the fruits that we produce will arrange for us to be
- 3) in the resurrection, which we have hope in; we have great hope in the resurrection

If we can look at it as God does, sleep is just a temporary on/off switch, just a temporary cessation.

We don't have to worry so much about it and be all concerned.

I want to show you that we can take so much heart and take so much hope in this. I want to leave you with one more point:

4. How we look at death is how we should look at our lives

We should look at our lives as being Christ. Our lives are lived for Christ. Our lives are to produce fruit (the 2nd point that I mentioned). Our lives are to produce Godly fruit, not just fruit, any old fruit. We need to stay connected to the vine and we need to produce Godly fruit.

But look at this. We can think back to Bill Pierce and say, we miss him and we miss all of the contribution, his humor, his conviction, and how he shared his faith with other people.

But we can also know that God in His great and gracious love awaits the resurrection when He will bring those who he has worked with to produce positive fruit to life again, eternal life.

Is there anything that can separate us from God and his love?

Romans 8:38: “For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, **shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord**” (vs 38-39).

What an amazing thing that death, not even this physical death, can separate us from the love that God has for us.

May you be blessed and may you have the confidence that God will work in you, as you die, we all will die. But as you die, don't fear it because at some point we will die. Don't fear the death of your loved ones. ***Nothing can separate us from God!***

Scriptural References:

- Psalm 23:4
- Ezekiel 33:11
- Philippians 1:20-21
- Revelation 21:4
- 1 Corinthians 2:9
- Romans 7:1, 4
- Romans 6:3-4, 6-7, 13, 16-19, 21-23
- Romans 7: 4-5
- Romans 8:9
- Luke 3:8
- John 11:25
- 1 Corinthians 15:51-54
- Romans 8:38-39

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Revelation 9:14
- Revelation 16:14
- Romans 7:2-3, 5-8, 13-25
- Romans 5:12
- Romans 8:2, 4-8, 10, 13, 15
- John 15

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