



LOOKING AT LIFE

Death

Fear
No More



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“No one wants to die.”

FEW THINGS ARE MORE frightening than death. Its shadow looms large over our lives, reminding us of how everything we cherish can be lost in an instant. Whether by illness, an accident, or old age, we will inevitably die. While some people may be more prepared for it, and a few may even long for it, most of us fear it. That's only natural: it is nearly impossible for most of us to completely conquer our fear of death, simply because we have not found a way to defeat nor escape it. If you're afraid to die, take heart—you're definitely not alone.

Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple and the brain behind the iPhone, said in a 2005 speech: “No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there.”

Jobs knew exactly what he was talking about, because he had been diagnosed

with pancreatic cancer and told that he had three to six months to live. We can catch a glimpse of his state of mind from his initial reaction to the bad news. “I lived with that diagnosis all day,” he recalled. Jobs died in 2011.

Why are we so afraid to die? What exactly do we fear? Perhaps you might identify with these common perceptions:

Death represents the end. Dying is absolutely final—it marks an end to our time here on Earth and we will no longer be able to fulfil our hopes and dreams or make right our wrongs and mistakes.

Death represents ultimate loss. We will lose not only our body, but also our identity, our dignity, and our significance. Death also separates us from our loved ones, leaving them—or us—with nothing but memories. Even if we are prepared for our own death, we may worry about those we leave behind and fear that they will not be taken care of in our absence.

Death represents the unknown. What lies beyond the grave? What will happen and whom will we face? Is there a heaven or a hell? Will we have to meet God and account for our actions? While some may look forward to the unknown,

most of us will feel insecure. Worse still, we face the terrifying prospect of dying alone. No one can accompany us on our final journey.

A Chinese saying sums it all up: “Life is like a mist that passes quickly by.” When death comes, it wipes out everything we were, we had, and we achieved, making life look most transient, like a mist that blows away in the lightest breeze.

Our Constant Battle against Death

IN HIS AWARD-WINNING book *The Denial of Death*, cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker observes that the fear of dying lies behind much of our effort in life. “The fear of death,” he writes, “haunts the human animal like nothing else. It is a mainspring of human activity, activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny for man.”

How true! We are constantly looking for medical treatments to fight the effects of ageing and to prolong our lives. We try to ensure that our legacies survive us by preserving our achievements and building monuments

in the hope that we will not fade into oblivion. Or we try to deny death's existence and focus on living life to the fullest—a principle captured in the adage, “Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die”.

While these methods may suffice for some people, most of us will find it hard to remove our deepest fears about death. No matter how much we deny death or try to avoid thinking about it, we are never quite ready for it. We may do all we can to prepare ourselves and our families for our passing, but when the possibility looms large—such as when we are diagnosed with a terminal illness—it is difficult to look death in the eye and say, “I’m ready to go.”

No matter how much we deny death or try to avoid thinking about it, we are never quite ready for it.

Why is this so? Such fears stem from the depths of our humanity. The idea of death goes against our very instinct to survive; it represents darkness and nothingness. It is hard to remain

unafraid of losing everything we have and being separated from our bodies and

our loved ones forever. No amount of medicine, planning, or positive thinking can remove the shadow of death that hangs over every one of us.

So what can we do? Is there any way for us to escape death and its impact? Can we live forever? Christians believe there is an answer.

Jesus, the Man Who Defeated Death

ABOUT 2,000 YEARS ago, there lived a man who went around teaching that he was “the way, the truth and the life”. His name was Jesus, and he made bold claims that he was the Son of God, and that he would defeat death. His enemies put him to death, but three days later, he rose from the dead.¹ He was seen alive in person by hundreds of people, including some who were sceptical at first.

Why was Jesus able to conquer death? He was raised by the power of God.

Why is this significant? The Bible explains: God created all of us as moral beings, so we know instinctively what is right and wrong. But we don't do what is right perfectly or consistently.² The Bible calls this sin—failing to meet God's holy and perfect moral standard³—and states that the consequence of sin

is death.⁴ As a result, we live under the curse of death. Death separates us from God forever.

Jesus, however, bore the consequence on our behalf. Although he was innocent, he willingly went to his death for this purpose—the sinless dying for the sinful. By rising from the dead, Jesus demonstrated his defeat of sin and its curse of death.

¹ “I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve.” –1 Corinthians 15:3–5

² “And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.”

–Romans 7:18–19

³ “For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.” –Romans 3:23

⁴ “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

–Romans 6:23

We Too Can Defeat Death

THE GOOD NEWS is that Jesus offers us the opportunity to share in his victory over sin and death. How? By believing that he died in our place and following him as our Lord. The Bible says: “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). It also tells us that God will not only forgive us, but will also give us eternal life—to be with Him forever.⁵

Imagine a student who is told to report to the school principal. Trembling, he approaches the principal’s office, afraid that he might be punished. Too fearful to enter, he waits outside for a while. Then he sees another boy strolling in confidently—and walking out a few moments later, smiling. He asks the other boy, “Why are you so unafraid about entering the principal’s office? And how could you come out so happily?” The boy looks at him and replies, “Because he’s my father.”

Jesus offers us the opportunity to share in his victory over sin and death.

When we believe in Jesus, we will be

like the second boy—we will no longer fear death. Although we will still die physically, God awaits us on the other side of death, and we do not need to fear his judgment anymore. We will enter fully into God's presence and enjoy an everlasting relationship with our Creator, free from pain and sorrow.⁶

As believers, we will also no longer need to face death alone. Why? Because Jesus will accompany us through death. As the Son of God who has faced and defeated death, he is able to walk with us throughout our lives, even the very end. Our family and friends may keep us company in life, but we will have to leave them behind when we die. Only Jesus can stay by our side through death itself, holding our hand tightly as we make the journey from life to death and into eternal life.

This is a promise we can place our hope in, because it comes from none other than Jesus, the Son of God, who has conquered sin and death.

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ARE YOU ANXIOUS about dying and worried about what it means for you? Do you feel overwhelmed? Do you struggle to accept its inevitability?

Consider turning to Jesus, who defeated death and showed his power over sin and its consequences. If you believe in his death and sacrifice on your behalf, and in his resurrection and promise of eternal life, Jesus' victory over sin and death can be yours as well.

If you believe in Jesus, you will no longer need to fear death and what comes after. Instead, you will be able to live in hope with the assurance that after your physical body dies, you will continue to live on and be with God, enjoying a close, personal relationship with him forever. You will no longer need to worry about dying alone, knowing that Jesus will be walking alongside you, through life, past death, and into eternal life.

⁵ “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” –John 3:16

⁶ “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” –John 14:1-4, 6

Will You Consider Turning to Jesus?

IF YOU WANT TO LEARN more about Jesus and how to share in his victory over sin and death, make contact with a local church where someone can help answer any questions you might have. Another way is to get hold of a Bible, which will tell you about God and how he can give you the comfort and peace you need.

We at Our Daily Bread Ministries would also like to help you seek Jesus and find the hope he offers. Simply use the attached form to request related biblical materials.

You can also visit us online at www.odb.org and browse our extensive selection of printed and digital resources.



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