

THE POWER OF DEATH

The wicked think that the power of death is the ultimate power. Threaten someone with death, they think, and you are likely to get what you want from that person! In the eyes of killers your life is not worth much, but according to Jesus your one life is of greater value than the whole world.

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done." (Matthew 16:24-27 NIV)

We all want to live! We do not want to die! However, we know that each one of us will die. Death will come to everyone, unless we happen to be the generation living when Jesus Christ returns to the earth. When the wicked threaten people with death they are threatening them with premature death, death before their time.

Jesus was NOT afraid of death. Jesus experienced eternity long before He came to earth as a baby. When Jesus was training His disciples, he knew that they would be threatened with death for preaching and teaching Jesus Christ. But Jesus did not want his disciples to stop preaching because of death threats. So He gave them these instructions: "So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or [nothing] hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven." (Matthew 10:26-33)

Jesus did not want His disciples to shut up! But yet, while they spoke, they were to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. Jesus knew what He was asking of his disciples. **"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles."** (Matthew 10:16-18)

Jesus was asking a lot. The most that Jesus' enemies could do was to threaten the messengers with death, and finally kill the messengers. But Jesus wanted His disciples to know that the worst those enemies could do was NOT the worst. The worst would be to deny Jesus Christ and then lose one's soul! That's right! Jesus said, instead of fearing the wicked, **"Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."** There is something greater than life in the body, and that is life in the spirit. Life in the body is temporary. Life in the spirit is eternal.

The preacher Paul felt this pressure of death that the wicked attempt to put on the righteous. "We are hard pressed on every side, [Paul wrote] but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body." (2 Corinthians 4:8-11)

And why do Christians act so boldly? Why won't Christians back down and compromise with the wicked? "For 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 instead with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of

Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others." (2 Corinthians 5:1-11)

Wicked men want to see original Christianity die out! That's right! Satan wants the world to be lost in sin, and Christ is the world's only chance of salvation. Satan is the greatest enemy of mankind. And he uses wicked people to achieve his ends. Satan wants to remain as the prince of this world, the "god of this age." But the gospel of Christ stands in Satan's way. Satan does not want you to take account of your sins. He wants you to think that your sins do NOT matter to God. Satan wants you to believe that your life does not matter to God. You are an insignificant being. You may as well live your life as you please. You only go around once in life, so you should live it with all the gusto you can. According to Satan, You need to party, have the most fun you can, because God does NOT care about your life! That is what Satan wants you to believe about the ONE God who created you! But your Creator does care! God wants you to live forever. Satan brought sin into the world, and death came with sin. But God created humans to live forever. Through sin Satan robs humans of a life with God. But through God's Son Jesus Christ, and by the preaching and teaching of Christians, God is defeating the propaganda of Satan!

Christ commanded His followers to preach the gospel to every creature and promised, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16)
"Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we [Christians] do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." (2 Corinthians 4:1-7)

Friends, when we believe in eternity, and believe in the things God has revealed through His Son Jesus, physical death loses its power over us! By Jesus' death and resurrection He has destroyed Satan's power of death! By His death, Jesus died for every human being who has ever lived and who will ever live. It was a vicarious death, that is, He died in our stead! In the words of Isaiah, "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

And so, Christians "See Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters." "Since the children have flesh and blood, [Jesus] too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of 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." ([Hebrews 2:9-15](#))

Christians are no longer the "slaves of death." We are no longer the slaves of sin. We are no longer the slaves of Satan. Satan nor his people has power over Christians by threatening death! "Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words." ([1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#))