

Introduction: How we feel about death says a lot about us as people. Everyone knows deep down inside that he or she will die. Some people are stoics about death: keep a 'stiff upper lip' and go about the business of life. Some people try to rationalize death: it cannot be controlled, so focus on what can be changed. Some people live in denial of death: my friend 'passed away', she went to a 'better place', I still remember his vitality and 'joy of living'. Many other people try to ignore the reality of death altogether. *** How many people are able to embrace death and truly believe it is a doorway to something better? This wholehearted acceptance of death is a gift of faith strengthened by God in people who have gone through many trials in life. In every trial they have experienced God's presence and faithfulness, so their confidence in God and His Word grows stronger with each passing year. When the time of their death draws near, they have no fear because they have been given God's assurance that death is the doorway to being in His presence forever. This is the greatest blessing that any human created in God's image can receive from God. *** It is no coincidence that Jesus' teaching to His disciples that He must be killed by men, and they must die to themselves, immediately follows what happened to the synagogue ruler after his young daughter died and to the woman suffering from continual bleeding for that girl's entire lifetime. Jesus brought both of these people through suffering and trials unimaginable for most of us. *** And Jesus can bring all His people through whatever difficult times and circumstances exceed their own strength. This includes His most difficult requirement to those who follow Him: the daily dying to themselves as they take up their cross to follow Him. *** The result of living His way will be: continual life in God's light and salvation, enjoying His pleasant favor. *** Let's go deeper into our passages, so we may all embrace our crosses.

I. Peter proclaims Jesus is Messiah; and, Jesus teaches that He must be killed and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:27-33)

A. Jesus is asking His disciples whom men say Him to be, then whom they say Him to be; Peter says He is being Messiah. (Verses 27-30)

1. Jesus and His disciples went out into the towns of Caesarea Philippi, and on the way He was asking them, 'Whom Me, men are saying to be?' (Verse 27)

Men saying: Thirty miles north, northeast of Capernaum on the central north shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus asks His disciples what they have heard people say about who He is.

2. They answered Him, saying, 'John the Baptizer, and some say Elijah, but others, one of the prophets'; and, He is asking them, 'But you all, whom Me, you all are saying to be?' (Verses 28-29a)

One of three: The majority of people consider Jesus to be His cousin John came back to life; but, others think He is Elijah because he never died, while some say He is a prophet come back to life.

You all: Then, Jesus changes the question and asks His disciples for their understanding of who He is.

3. Peter, having answered, is saying to Him, 'Thou indeed are being The Messiah'; and, He commanded to them that no one they may be telling about Him. (Verses 29b-30)

Peter – Messiah: Peter emphatically calls Jesus The Messiah (Anointed King) prophesied through Nathan and others (2 Samuel 7:8-16; Psalm 2; Isaiah 61).

Tell no one: At this time, before His resurrection, Jesus does not want to openly declare He is Messiah.

B. Jesus begins to teach them He must suffer many things and be rejected; when Peter rebukes Him, Jesus commands Peter depart for not thinking of God. (Mark 8:31-33)

1. He began to teach them that it is being necessary The Son of Man many things to suffer, and to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and to be killed and, after three days, to rise again. (Verses 31-32a)

Suffer, rejected, killed: As a man as perfect as Adam at creation (Romans 5:12-19), Jesus must suffer and be rejected by the sinful leaders of the people, and then killed.

Rise again: But, Jesus is careful to conclude He will be raised to life again. However, it is doubtful if His followers heard this after their shock at hearing Him say He will be killed!

2. Peter, having taken aside Him, he began to rebuke Him. (Verse 32b)

Peter rebukes Jesus: Peter is so startled He begins to rebuke Him! That took 'guts'.

3. And He rebuked Peter, saying, 'Thou must depart behind Me, adversary; for not thou are thinking things of God; but, things of men'. (Verse 33)

Jesus rebukes Peter: Jesus quickly sets the record straight! Peter is the one needing rebuke.

Not of God: Peter has not yet learned to think as God thinks; but, only as men think: namely, far below what God thinks (Isaiah 55:6-12).

Application: Peter is not alone. All of us must seek to have the mind and thoughts of God, not men.

II. Jesus commands His followers to disown themselves and be ready to die so they will not experience death; then, three see Him in dazzling glory as they experience what David desired. (Mark 8:34-9:8; Psalm 27:1-4)

A. Jesus says whoever desired to follow Him must take up his cross; and any desiring to save his life will lose it; but, those having stood firm will in no way experience death. (Mark 8: 34-9:1)

1. Having called the people with His disciples, He said to them, 'If anyone is desiring after Me to follow, he must disown himself, and he must take up his cross, and he must be following Me'. (Mark 8:34)

Cost of following Jesus: The cost for a person to follow Jesus is to give up all ego, and be prepared to die for The One who died for him or her.

2. 'For whoever may be desiring his soul to save, he will lose it; but, whoever will lose his soul for My sake and The Gospel, he will save it; for, what is it profiting a man to gain the whole world and to forfeit his soul?' (Mark 8:35-36)

Reversals: Jesus makes it clear, people who try to save themselves will lose their soul; but, all who lose themselves for Him and His Gospel will save their soul.

Do not forfeit: With a rhetorical question Jesus emphasizes there is nothing in this life on earth worth forfeiting one's life forever.

3. 'For, what a man may give, purchase price, for his soul?' (Mark 8:37)

Purchase price: Any clear-thinking person would give all he or she has to save his or her soul!

Application: We must all be willing to pay whatever it costs us to follow Jesus in His way!

4. 'For who may be ashamed of Me and My words in generation unfaithful and sinful, also The Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels'. (Mark 8:38)

Un-faithful generation: Jesus says He will be ashamed of all people who are ashamed of Him and His Death for the sins of people.

Come in glory: Such people will suffer when He finally returns to earth in all the glory of His Father and all heaven. He is saying, contrary to human thinking, death leads to glory!

As Messiah, Jesus showed that death precedes glory

5. And, He was saying to them. 'Truly, I am saying to you all that they are being some here, of those (who) have stood firm, these not, in no way, they may experience death until they may see the Kingdom of God come in power'. (*Mark 9:1*)

No way experience death: With the strongest expression in any language (a triple negative), Jesus says those standing firm in the faith of Him will not experience death before God's Kingdom comes in power.

Kingdom in power: By this, He meant the gift of The Holy Spirit to His disciples at the first Pentecost after He returned to His Father (Acts 2).

Application: Let us pray to be filled with the power of The Holy Spirit as at the first Pentecost.

Let's die to ourselves so God will be glorified in the work of The Holy Spirit in us.

As Messiah, Jesus showed that death precedes glory

B. Three apostles see Jesus transformed with dazzling glory; and, they are terrified before a cloud overshadows them and a voice commands they hear Him. (*Mark 9:2-8*)

1. After six days, Jesus is taking, Peter and Jacob and John and bringing them to a high mountain with alone only (them). (*Verses 2a-b*)

High mountain: This would be Mount Hermon, with its nine thousand foot peak, ten miles north northeast of where they had been.

2. He had been transformed before them, and His garments became dazzling white, exceedingly, such as no cloth bleacher on earth is being able so to bleach. (*Verses 3c-3*)

Transformed: Only Jesus' 'inner circle' of Peter and the sons of Zebedee (Mark 1:19-20), were witnesses to this glorious transformation of Jesus on a mountain symbolic of Mount Sinai.

Clothes bright: For His clothes to be glorious, Jesus' own glory had to be greater to shine through cloth.

Others did not see this glory in Jesus until after He was raised from the dead.

As Messiah, Jesus showed that death precedes glory

3. And it was seen to them Elijah with Moses, and they were being talking with Jesus. (*Verse 4*)

Moses and Elijah: These are the witnesses John later saw after the sixth trumpet, just before Jesus' second coming (Revelation 9:16; 11:3-14). Luke's Gospel says they talked about Jesus' 'exodus' to deliver people from slavery to sin (9:31).

4. Peter, having answered, is saying to Jesus, 'Great One! Good (beautiful) it is being us here to be; let us make three tabernacles: to Thee one, to Moses one, to Elijah one'. (*Verse 5*)

Three tabernacles: The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated God's provision before His people entered the land He graciously gave them. Since they discussed the first exodus, Peter may have anticipated Jesus' death would give a greater exodus.

5. Not he had been knowing what he might be saying in response because terrified they were. (*Verse 6*)

Terrified, not knowing: Peter had no idea what he should say, but as the spokesman, Peter felt compelled to say something to deal with their terror.

6. It happened, a cloud overshadowing them, and it happened a voice out of the cloud, 'This is being The Son of Me, beloved: you all must be hearing of Him'. (*Verse 7*)

Overshadowing cloud: Then it happened: the glorified Jesus was overshadowed by a cloud.

Voice: Then God declared Jesus His beloved Son, and commanded all to hear Him, fulfilling His words to Moses in Deuteronomy (18:18-19) which called to account all not listening to Him.

7. Unexpectedly, having looked about, no one, no more they saw, but Jesus only, with them. (*Verse 8*)

Only Jesus: Unexpectedly, only Jesus was with them; but, He is more than enough. So, this early glimpse of His glory should have given them hope after they saw Jesus crucified.

Application: We should be encouraged by this event to accept the necessity of dying to ourselves with Jesus to share in His resurrection glory.

As Messiah, Jesus showed that death precedes glory

C. David proclaims The Covenant God is his light, salvation and refuge; and, seeks to dwell in Yahweh's Presence to behold His pleasant favor. (*Psalms 27:1-4*)

1. {to David} Yahweh, my light and my salvation / from whom I will fear? // Yahweh refuge of my life / from whom I will tremble? (*Verse 1*)

Light, salvation, refuge: David proclaims three things God is: light, salvation and refuge.

No fear: Because of this he will neither be afraid of, nor tremble before, anyone!

2. When to assail me those doing evil to eat my flesh / my adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and they fell //

If will encamp against me a host / not it will fear, my heart // If it will rise against me, war / in this, I am trusting. (*Verses 2-3*)

Wicked enemies: David considers five ways the adversary intimidates God's people:

evildoers, adversaries, enemies, hosts and war.

No fear: David declares his heart will not fear because he is always trusting God who is light, salvation and refuge!

3. One thing I have asked from Yahweh which I will seek / to dwell in the house of Yahweh all the days of my life //

to behold the favor of Yahweh / and to inquire in His Temple. (*Verse 4*)

Seek Presence: David will always seek to be in God's Presence because this is the greatest blessing.

Behold favor: Five synonyms: kindness, delightfulness, pleasantness, goodness and loveliness!

Application: We must all pray to be filled with God's delightfulness as a result of this hour of worship.

God's people seek to dwell in His Light

Conclusion: Jesus is the promised Messiah who fulfilled God's prophetic words to die for the iniquities of people and be raised to give them life. As a result, His followers will disown themselves and be willing to die with Him so as to never experience death. But, rather, they will share in His dazzling glory to experience what David described in one of his Psalms.

As Messiah, Jesus showed that death precedes glory