

To The Point...

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Editor: David Watts Jr

Thinking Properly About Death

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We can be thankful to God that He directed the apostle Paul to write letters to many churches, and we can be thankful that God determined to preserve those letters for our reading and our benefit.

Often times we see consistent themes that span across Paul's letters. When we see such themes, it is good for us to examine what the inspired apostle is teaching and make sure that we add these truths to our knowledge and to our living.

One important theme that the Lord wants us to understand and to incorporate into our living is the **truth about death**. Death is one of those powerful and strong concepts that immediately fill us with emotions and ideas. Most of us, if not all of us, have been touched by death in some form or fashion.

It is therefore easy to allow our experiences with death, and the emotions it causes, to be the dominate thoughts in our mind with respect to the subject of death. But God wants us to think properly about death and to incorporate the things He has revealed about death into our lives.

One place where Paul teaches about death is **2 Cor. 1:8-10**. Please take a moment to read this passage so that we might make some observations.

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One truth we glean from this place is found in this statement from verse 9, “Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.” Paul is clearly indicating that as we think about death, are challenged by death, or face death ourselves, one thing we must learn to do is to put our full trust in “God who raises the dead.”

We think we can control many things in life. But periodically we come to circumstances that are simply beyond our limited abilities to control. Such is the case when we battle death or face the reality of death. In such times, we learn very clearly that we must lean upon God. We must trust in God, because God is the one who raises the dead.

Vivid displays of this took place in the New Testament. You might recall the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead in **John 11**. You might also remember from **Acts 9** the resurrection from the dead of Dorcas.

But our God is not merely a God that has raised *some* people from the dead in the past. Our God whom we serve is a God that will raise *all* people from the dead in the future. This is what Jesus was describing in **John 5:28-29** as He said,

“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

So one thing we learn from Paul’s teaching on death, is that the reality of death ought to cause us to lean more abundantly upon our God who will raise *all* from the dead one day.

Another occasion where Paul helps Christians think correctly about death is in **2 Cor. 5:1-8**. Please take a moment to read this passage in its entirety.

In this place, the Lord wants us to know that our bodies may rightly be considered as a tent. A tent is very much the image of a temporary abode. Even today, we may live in a tent, but only for a short time. What we really want to dwell in is our house—a more permanent dwelling.

Death forces us to think about our bodies as a place of temporary abode—as tent. And the reality is that death will destroy this tent unless the Lord returns first. But the reality of death for the faithful child of God is also this: death is but a transition from a temporary dwelling place to a permanent one. For the one who once lived in tents, according to Paul in **2 Cor. 5:1-2**, will soon dwell in a “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

And Paul says, this is what one should earnestly desire, “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven.”

Paul not only helps us understand that death is but a transition from dwelling in “tents” to dwelling in a “house not made with hands,” but he helps us see that death is not a process of being “unclothed” but rather of being “further clothed.” And most of all, death is the process of mortality being “swallowed up by life” (**2 Cor. 5:4**).

Paul then would have us see our temporary abode in the flesh as though we

lived in a tent. Paul would have us see death as a transition to a “house not made with hands,” as a process of being “further clothed,” and as a process of mortality being “swallowed up by life.”

Let us consider just one more place where Paul helps us with correct thinking about death. Take a moment to read and consider **Romans 8:38-39**.

Paul has been speaking in the context (see **Rom. 8:35**) about the fact that nothing can “separate us from the Love of Christ.” He rules out tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword. Nothing can tear us away from the Love of Christ.

Yet, in **Rom. 8:36** he quotes from **Psalms 44:22** and says, “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

What a sad picture! Faithful saints of God suffering murder and persecution—as sheep bound for the slaughter. The sheep is one of those animals that has no real ability to defend itself. When sheep are taken to the slaughter, there is really no hope.

But the Psalmist says, “we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” The Psalmist is not saying “we are sheep for the slaughter” but rather that we are **accounted** that way, or **considered** that way. He seems to be describing the way evil men who persecute saints consider those same saints—as nothing more than sheep to be destroyed.

But here’s the final truth about death we’ll consider from **Rom. 8:38**. Not even death can separate us from God. Even in the most unbearable times of persecution and torment, not even the most man can do—destroy our flesh—will separate us from the Love of Christ.

Let’s be sure to embed in our minds these Bible truths about death.

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Why I Am A Christian Only

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I am a Christian only.

I am not a “Baptist Christian”. I am not a “Methodist Christian.” I am not a Catholic.

I am a Christian only because that is the only kind of Christian I can read about in the Bible. **Acts 11:26** indicates that the disciples were “first called Christians in Antioch.” Since the disciples in the Bible took Christ’s name only—that’s the only name I want.

I am a Christian only because I am a “Christ-ian.” I belong to Christ because I have been buried with him “through baptism into death” so that I might “walk in newness of life.” (**Romans 6:4**). Since I was buried with Christ, and not some man, I’ll take Christ’s name alone and no other.

I am a Christian only because I do not belong to some man, but belong only to Christ. **Gal. 3:27** shows that I have put on Christ, not man. Thus, I will take Christ’s name, not man’s.

I am a Christian only because the Bible condemns dividing up and following after men. In **1 Cor. 1:12** some apparently were trying to be “Paul-ians”, “Apollos-ians” or “Cephas-ians.” Such division is condemned. Let us be Christians only.

I am a Christian only because the Bible shows in **Acts 2:47** that when I obeyed the Gospel the Lord added me to **the** church, not **a** church. **The** church is not a church some man built. Rather, it is **the** church that Jesus promised to build in **Mat. 16:18**. Since Christ built **the** church and the Lord added me to **the** church, I am a Christian and a Christian only.

Are you a Christian only? If not, why not?

Test Your Knowledge

- How many times did Jesus say that Peter should forgive someone who sins against him?
- How old was David when he began to reign as King of Israel?
- Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses for marrying a woman from what country?
- Who was told by God to do something once a day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day?

- What was the name of the prophet that took Paul's belt and prophesied sad news concerning his future?
- Who said to Jesus, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"?
- Who was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai?
- Why was Demetrius concerned about Paul's preaching?

Answers on Page 8

How Should Christians View The Election?

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Let me strongly suggest four appropriate reactions.

You should be thankful. Be thankful that you live in a country that gives you the right to express your will with the ballot. Be thankful that in this country there will be a peaceful transition to a new government. Be thankful that race was not an issue in this election. Paul said, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (**1 Th. 5:18**).

You should be concerned. The majority of Americans voted their pocketbooks in this election, and moral issues like abortion and gay rights took a back seat. If Mr. Obama's track record is a reliable indicator of the future, he will not bring this nation closer to biblical morality, and that should be of grave concern. "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to *any* people" (**Pr. 14:34**). The French political thinker and historian, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) reportedly once observed: "America is great because she is good, and if America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great."

You should pray. Paul said, "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (**1 Tim. 2:1-2**).

You should trust God. The hope of any nation lies, not in its political leaders, but in the Creator. The psalmist said: "*It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes*" (**Psa. 118:8-9**).

A Good Disciple

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Elisha was a disciple of the great prophet Elijah. He was designated as Elijah's successor but first worked as Elijah's servant (**1 Kings 19:15-21**). When God was ready to take Elijah to heaven by a whirlwind in **2 Kings 2:1-14**, Elisha showed the qualities of a good disciple. If we will live by these qualities, we will be good disciples for our Lord's cause. Let's notice these qualities.

First, a good disciple follows (**2 Kings 2:1-2, 4, 6**). Wherever Elijah went Elisha insisted on going too. We should follow our Lord Jesus this diligently (**Luke 9:23; John 12:26**). Truth deserves to be followed and preserved. "Buy the truth and sell it not ..." (**Proverbs 23:23**). But just as Elisha surely learned the difficult life of a prophet of God, so the Christian learns the difficulty of following the Lord. It is difficult to follow the Lord when your friends or family ridicule your position on doctrines such as instrumental music and church-supported institutions (although I certainly hope this is never the case). It will be difficult to follow the Lord when your brethren oppose you on doctrines such as divorce and remarriage, fellowship, or creation. Ridicule and opposition will not end, so we must endure and follow the Lord.

Second, a good disciple is faithful (**2 Kings 2:3, 5, 8**). Even though Elijah and the sons of the prophets both seemed to try to dissuade Elisha from following, he was faithful. He was not going to be dissuaded (**Luke 14:26-27; 1 Corinthians 4:2**). A faithful Christian will not be pulled away from serving the Lord by a whim or by some unimportant, irrelevant, trivial reason. They will put God and His kingdom first. Far too many Christians now do not love the Lord more than they love their job or their recreation. Sadly, this fact is often demonstrated when Christians are not even willing to

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attend worship services regularly or gospel meeting services that are arranged by a local congregation (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). Is this a good disciple?

Third, a good disciple has foresight (**2 Kings 2:9-12**). When Elijah asked Elisha what he wanted, he asked for a double portion of his spirit. The enormity of the loss of Elijah so gripped the humble Elisha that he asked to be granted spiritual power far beyond his own capabilities to meet the responsibilities of the great task that lay before him. He wished that Elijah's mighty prowess might continue to live through him. In short, he asked for a spiritual blessing. If we could choose anything to be given us, would we waste that choice on a material possession or would we desire something greater and more heavenly? Solomon chose wisdom and an understanding heart above material riches (**1 Kings 3:9-13**).

Are we willing to seek for knowledge and understanding of the Lord's word rather than financial advantage in this life? The assaults of the Devil in the forms of immorality and false doctrine never stop. Congregations need strong, wise servants of the Lord who can see the end of a matter and know the Bible and how to defeat ungodliness and error.

Fourth, a good disciple has faith (**2 Kings 2:13-14**). Elisha picked up Elijah's mantle and performed the same miracle that Elijah had done earlier. He had the faith to believe that God would give to him the power to work miracles like his great predecessor. It is our faith which gives us the ability to overcome the world (**1 John 5:4**). This victory does not take the form of miraculous actions, but of a victory over sin and Satan. When we cast off the dominion of sin, we must do so by faith. Christ's disciples live by faith (**2 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:6**).

Are you a good disciple? If you were to take stock in how you have lived your life to this moment, would you hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (**Matthew 25:21, 23**)? If not, then maybe you need to repent!

Aquila And Priscilla

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If Ahab and Jezebel are the worst couple ever mentioned the Scriptures, then Aquila and Priscilla are perhaps the best. Familiarity with this godly couple will greatly encourage couples as they strive to obtain that their crown. The following are three great attributes of Aquila and Priscilla.

First, they were in harmony. Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned six times and always together (**Acts 18:2-3, 18, 26, Romans 16:3-5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, 2 Corinthians 4:19**). They evidently took the idea of being "one flesh" seriously, and worked closely together.

Second, they were hospitable. They had housed Paul (**Acts 18:2-3**). **Acts 18:26** says that they had extended the same courtesy to Apollos. They obeyed the command to be hospitable (**Romans 12:13**).

Third, they were helpful. Paul described them as his “*helpers in Christ Jesus.*” They also instructed Apollos (**Acts 18:24-26**) and they allowed the church to meet in their home (**Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19**). They were great assets to the church because of their help.

A greater couple could not be found. May the good Lord of heaven help us to be as harmonious, hospitable, and helpful as they. The kingdom of heaven and our homes will be exceedingly blessed.

Let Your Light Shine... Even on Facebook

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Jesus clearly instructs us, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but under a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (**Matt. 5:14-16**)

As Christians we must understand what Jesus teaches. And more than understand what Jesus teaches, we must practice what He teaches. By its very nature, light is made to shine. And light is made to illuminate and benefit us and others. In the process of conducting ourselves as a “living sacrifice” (**Rom. 12:1**) and not allowing ourselves to be “conformed to the world” (**Rom. 12:2**), we must be a good example in all that we do.

This surely includes how we behave and dress and act in school, at work, and in all public circumstances. Do people see us and think, “That must be a religiously minded person”? On the contrary, is it more likely that the world views our life and conduct and concludes that we are ungodly and not spiritually minded?

Answers

- Seventy times seventy – **Matthew 18:21-22**
- 30 years old – **2 Sam. 5:4**
- Moses married a woman from Cush (Ethiopia) – **Numbers 12:1**
- The Israelites – **Joshua 6:1-4**
- Agabus – **Acts 21:10-11**
- Nathanael – **John 1:49**
- Haman – **Esther 7:10**
- Demetrius made idols and Paul's teaching was turning people away from idols. - **Acts 19:24-27**

Again, let's think carefully. Does the world see the way we act, dress and conduct ourselves and think, "here's someone that is probably a spiritually-minded person" or does the world see our dress, conduct and behavior and conclude this is not likely to be a spiritually-minded person?

Now it is of course true that the world cannot discern *everything* about us just based upon our appearances, behavior and dress. And it is also true that impressions can be false. But factually, our appearance, conduct and dress is something to be concerned about *because Jesus says so!*

Jesus commands us that we behave in such a way that the world sees us and gives glory to God. Again, I know that a random, chance, 30 second encounter on the street is perhaps unlikely to give someone enough information by which they could definitively conclude, "here's a spiritually-minded person" and accordingly give glory to God.

But it is very true that many of our dealings with people are more involved and truly people do form impressions about us based upon our behavior, actions and dress – and we as Christians are to make sure we're sending the right message.

This even applies on Facebook.

Younger readers are certainly aware of the tremendous popularity of Facebook, a so-called "social networking" Internet site. Older readers may not be as aware of its popularity but Facebook is the 5th most popular destination on the Internet. There are more than 120 million active users on the site including this author.

Facebook permits a user to establish linkages with other "friends" which will then permit the sharing of photos, comments, and other forms of communication. (Myspace is another such social networking site and much of what I say here will apply to that site as well.)

In the midst of all this sharing photos and communication, a Christian will be wise to ponder whether their conduct and behavior made public for their "friends" to see – speaks to the fact that they wear the name of Christ. Do the comments you make on Facebook reveal that you are a Christian? Do the photos you post of yourself and your friends reveal Godly behavior and chaste conduct?

May I suggest some questions that might guide us as we seek to let our good example shine forth, so that men might glorify God – even on Facebook:

- Young people, do your parents have full access to what you are doing on Facebook? Do they know what pictures you are posting of yourself and your friends? If not, why not?
- Parents, do you know whether your child is on Facebook? Do you know who their "friends" are? Do you know what pictures they have uploaded to Facebook? Are they modest? Are they chaste? Are they Godly? Do they reveal that this person is a Christian?
- Young men and young women, are the pictures you post discreet, chaste, pure and holy? Has your affection for one another gone too far and been captured on camera in a way that is not holy, not pure, not chaste and not discreet?
- If your preacher sent you a "friend" invitation on Facebook, would it

make you nervous to know that he would see all of the pictures you have posted? What if an elder sent you a friend invitation? Would you quickly clean up your photos to remove some that might embarrass you? If so, what does this reveal?

- Do your friends on Facebook leave comments on your site that are suggestive, crude, profane or ungodly? I understand that we can't control what other people say. But if their language is ungodly, isn't it time to be a shining light of good influence on your friends and encourage them to clean up their language and behavior? (**Col 3:8**) And if they won't clean up their language, isn't it time to end our relationship with them? We can't control what our friends say but we can control who our friends are – both in the “real world” and on Facebook.
- Have your friends made pictures of you and linked them to your Facebook – pictures that do not present you as living a life as a Christian? If so, don't we need to repent of such behavior and ask our friends to get rid of such pictures?
- Are you pictured in modest clothing? Of course, to be pictured in modest clothing you first must be *wearing* modest clothing. Are you dressing in a way that is consistent with a person that professes godliness? (**1 Tim. 2:10**)
- Young men, does your Facebook activity indicate that you are, “a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned”? (**Titus 2:6-8**)

Brethren, whether young or old we are to be a good example to others around us. They are to see our light and glorify God the Father.

Even on Facebook.