

# The Death of Death

## Romans 6:5-11

- 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,**
- 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.**
- 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.**
- 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,**
- 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.**
- 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.**
- 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

INTRODUCTION: A few years ago we toured the Winchester mansion in San Jose, California. It is a massive and strange house where Sarah Winchester lived after her husband died of influenza in 1918. Winchester had acquired a fortune by manufacturing and selling rifles. The thought of all the men who had been killed by her family's guns haunted Mrs. Winchester. Because of her grief and her long time interest in spiritism, Sarah sought out a medium to contact her dead husband. The medium told her, "As long as you keep building your home, you will never face death."

Sarah believed the spiritist, so she bought the unfinished 17-room mansion and started to build on to it. The project continued until she died at the age of 85. It cost 5 million dollars at a time when workmen earned 50 cents a day. The mansion has 150 rooms, 13 bathrooms, 2,000 doors, 47 fireplaces, and 10,000 windows. And Mrs. Winchester left enough materials so that they could have continued building for another 80 years.

Today that house stands as more than a tourist attraction. It is a silent witness to the dread of death that holds millions of people in bondage.

Hebrews 2:14-15 says, **"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."**

### 1. The Beginning of Death

There once was a time that this world was a pleasant place to live. There were no thorns; no thistles. No pain; no travail; no disease; and no death. The fruit of the land yielded itself willingly and abundantly. We sometimes think that because death is so prevalent, that it is normal. But death is not natural. When God created this world, He created it all very good. He breathed life into the first man. The human body was made perfectly to last throughout eternity. And there was no such thing as death.

But sin changed all that by bringing death into the world. Death brought along with him thorns, thistles, pain and disease. The human body began to decay and deteriorate. You might say death was born one day in the Garden of Eden. God had said to Adam, **"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die,"** (Gen. 2:16-17). Death was conceived in Adam and Eve's temptation and birthed the moment they sinned. The parent of death is sin and the grandparent of death is Satan. 1 John 3:8 says, **"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning."** Paul comments on death's beginning in Romans 5:12, **"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned--"**

Death is a separation. Physical death is the separation of the soul or spirit from the body. Spiritual death is the separation of the person from God. So, on the day that Adam fell to temptation and sinned, he died spiritually. He was separated

from God by his sin. And physical death began to take hold of Adam's body.

## 2. The Spread of Death

It didn't take long at all for death to take his first human victim. Adam and Eve's son Cain, motivated by jealousy struck down his own brother in a field and left Abel there for death to devour him. Death came for Abel as a result of Cain's sin. No different today. Innocent people everywhere suffer and die because of others' selfishness. Death is the wages of sin.

Death spread quickly to all men. In Genesis 5 Moses records for us the genealogy of Adam. The most powerful thing about this chapter of the Bible for me is not how long some of these men lived. But the phrase that catches my attention is this, **"and he died."** Death comes again and again, **"and he died...and he died... and he died."**

Death rapidly becomes the strongest predator on the face of the earth -- relentlessly tracking down each victim, catching and wrestling him down to the rot and mire of the grave! Day and night death goes to and fro throughout the earth stalking his prey. He is seen lurking in the shadows, with the souls of men in his grasp. He is the terror of the night. He plays no favorites and is not prejudice: He leaps upon young and old; man, woman, and child alike. Red, yellow, black or white!

At the mere mention of Death's name, mortal man trembled! He could boast that of the millions of men and women who had lived on this earth, only 2 had escaped his clutches -- Enoch and Elijah! They were simply the exceptions that proved the rule. Death struck terror in the hearts of mankind.

In Daniel 3 death went into the fire with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego expecting to have their charred bodies, only to be robbed of victory by the Fourth Man in the Fire, which was the Son of God! Death would eventually get these 3 Hebrew boys and would have another encounter with that Fourth Man. He would be patient.

## 3. Death's attempt on Jesus.

But God had a plan to destroy death. One day it was as if God Himself looked at His watch and said, "It is time." The Bible

says in Galatians 4:4 – **"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law."** This son, Jesus, was born into the old order of things where sin and death were the law. Death found out that this "Fourth Man in the Fire", the very Son of God, had taken upon Himself human flesh and came to dwell among mortal man. But without the power of sin behind him, death and the devil could not catch Jesus.

Not that the devil did not try. When Jesus was just a baby, wicked King Herod put to death all the baby boys in Bethlehem, trying to kill the Son of God. Once an angry mob from Jesus' home town tried to throw Him off a cliff, but he walked right through the crowd and went on his way (Luke 4:30). At least two other times people tried to seize Jesus but no one laid a hand on Him **"for His hour had not yet come,"** (John 7:30; 8:20).

Death had met his match. Jesus began overturning the effects of sin and death. He forgave people's sins. He healed their diseases. He freed people from evil spirits. He even raised the dead back to life.

## 4. Death finally meets Jesus.

Though thwarted in his previous attempts, the devil and death do not give up. Just a few days before Passover this Son of God comes to Jerusalem as the Messiah. The authorities in Jerusalem turn against Jesus, looking for a way to kill Him. Satan enters Judas and he betrays Jesus to death.

Can you picture Death as he goes along with the guards to the Garden of Gethsemane? His fierceness is kindled as he sees the One who has alluded him so long. He snarls and roars, trying his best to intimidate and terrorize this Son of God, but Jesus looks him straight in the eye and does not flinch! There is not one indication of fear. This Jesus has the look of a conqueror! It is Death that feels a tremor of fear! Could it be that he has finally met his master!?

I can see Death as he goes along with the crowd from the garden to the house of Caiphas and then to Pilate. The devil whispered in the ears of the frenzied crowd, stirring them to cry out: **"Crucify Him, Crucify Him! ... Release unto us**

**Barabbas ... Let the blood of this man, Jesus, be on our hands and on our children's hands!"** This crowd which has murder in their heart cries out to Pilate for death to Jesus.

Satan and his demons must have celebrated as Christ was laid upon that old rugged cross; shouting with glee as the brutal Roman soldier placed nails in each hand and feet of Jesus; laughing as the soldiers lifted the cross and dropped into place. Jesus hung there for hours suffering and bleeding.

Still death could not touch Jesus, he could not steal the life from the Lord. Jesus had claimed to have power over death when He said, **"My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again,"** (John 10:17-18).

At noon the sun refused to shine as darkness covered the whole land. Jesus, the perfect sinless Son of God, took on the sins the whole world. Isaiah says, **"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; ... All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."**

Finally the earth convulsed, the Son of God cries out, and He gives up His spirit. Death finally had his biggest prize. Death met Jesus head on that day. Hebrews 2:9 says that **"... we see Jesus ... for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone."** Jesus suffered death and tasted death for everyone. Philippians 2:8 says Jesus became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Jesus didn't just faint that day. Jesus died that day. And Death rejoiced!

But God's plans were a lot more subtle than what death, or the devil, could see. Jesus died as an innocent man, in another person's place. Jesus took the death sentence for every one of us. It was all God's plan to defeat death forever.

## **5. Death is Defeated.**

God revealed the next step in His plan at the crack of dawn on Sunday morning. While the devil and death were still wallowing in their supposed victory, an angel came to Jesus' grave. The

angel blinded the guards and they fell unconscious. He heaved the stone away from the grave. Whether Jesus was in there and then walked out, or He was already risen and gone, I can't say. All I know is that where Jesus had lay, there were only the burial wrappings. Jesus was no longer dead. He was alive! And He appeared, first to Mary, then to the women, to Peter, to two on the road to Emmaus, to all the apostles. Jesus spoke with His them, ate with them, taught them for some 40 days after that Easter Sunday. They all saw Him and touched Him. And they spread the good news around the world.

Romans 1:4 says that Jesus was **"declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."** The resurrection confirmed that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, an immortal who stepped into this mortal world, took on human flesh, and suffered what all flesh suffers... Death. But as they say, you can't keep a good man down. The day that Jesus rose from the grave was the day death got its sentence of death. And we can say, as Paul did, quoting Hosea 13 from the Old Testament, **"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"**

So what did Jesus do to defeat Death? Romans 6:9-11 gives us a clue. There Paul says, **"Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him."** You see, since Jesus was raised from death with a glorified, immortal, imperishable body, He cannot suffer Death again. So then, Paul says this about Jesus' new life in verse 10: **"For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God."**

And then, Paul applies that truth to us in verse 11: **"Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."** As followers of Jesus Christ, the Death-Defeater, we are guaranteed victory. Because Sin and Death have no permanent power over us, we can walk in newness of life. We no longer have to live in fear of death. Verse 5 says, **"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."**

So where does death fit into our lives today? If Jesus defeated death on Easter Sunday, how is it that we still die? What Jesus

did back then was He put Death on Death Row. Death is still around but not with the power and grip it once had. 2 Timothy 1:9-10 holds a key to understanding this. There Paul says that God **“has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”**

Jesus **“abolished death,”** He “rendered it useless or powerless.” That is, Jesus took the sting out of Death. He removed the finality of it, the harshness of it. Because, now, when a believer dies, he enters into God’s presence. For the believer, Death is not a curse but, a blessing. D.L. Moody used to say, “Some day, you will read in the papers that D.L. Moody of East Northfield is dead. Don’t believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now!”

Revelation 20 tells us about death's final destruction: Rev.20:14 – **“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”** Hades is the grave, the place of the dead. So, Death and the grave will one day be swallowed up in victory. The victory belongs to Jesus, and if we belong to Jesus, that victory belongs to us as well.

Easter Sunday is the day Death entered Death Row. His time is running short because Christ is the winner. Easter reminds us of the new and fresh start God gives us over Sin and Death.

John Mark McMillan has written a powerful song about the death of death. Let me end with that today. It goes like this:

### **Death To Death**

As a child, you occasionally heard of this thing called death.  
But being so consumed with life,  
you never gave it a second thought.  
Life was life, and it was everywhere.  
It was in everything.

You had no worries, you had no fear.  
Sure, there were some tears here and there,  
But those tears would soon fade.  
And life would be life, once again.

But just as the darkness overtakes us as the day slowly fades away,  
Death reveals himself to you.

It's easy to get caught up trying to live life,  
Trying to do your thing.  
A bad decision here, an opportunity missed there,  
And suddenly you wake up in a place you never thought you'd be,  
Doing things you never thought you'd do.  
How did everything get upside down?

You put on a smile and go about your business  
Masking your pain with all things artificial.  
But with every passing day that proves harder and harder to do.  
Deep inside, your secrets are destroying you,  
Your shame is controlling you,  
You're dying from the inside out.  
Death comes for everyone,  
And it's never satisfied.

But then, hope appears,  
Like the beautiful sun rising in the dawn sky,  
An answer is revealed.  
You see, on this dirty rugged cross,  
He hung and He bled, for you.  
He took your pain, your grief, your shame,  
He took on death.  
And when He breathed His last, He said,  
"It is finished!"

But for us, who believe in Jesus, we are not finished,  
For us, death is no longer the end.  
Death no longer has the last word.  
When Jesus stepped into the grave,  
He came back with the keys,  
He brought death to death.  
He put death in it's grave!

So what about you today? Do you live in fear of Death? Do you need a new life? A resurrection? A new start? Will you let Him give you victory over sin and death?