

Heidelberg Catechism 42-43 – Christian Deaths; Better Deaths

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Today you will see 2 benefits you get from Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. They are: You get to die a better death at the end of your life (though you must wait for it), and you get to die a better death while you live your life now.

Our headings are: A Better Death when you Die, and A Better Death while you live.

Our goals are: That you will know that Christ's death removed the fear of death so you can enter into heaven, and that you must and will die to sin in this life.

A Better Death when you Die

42 Q. SINCE CHRIST HAS DIED FOR US, WHY DO WE STILL HAVE TO DIE ?

A. Our death does not pay the debt of our sins. Rather, it puts an end to our sinning and is our entrance into eternal life.

1. We live in a death culture. We are inundated 淹没 with news about abnormal deaths: suicide, assisted suicide, euthanasia 安乐死, planned barren-hood 有计划的 not 生育 – killing the next generation by not having children, and abortion. People film their suicides online so others can watch. Many followed the news recently of a young girl who was bullied and killed herself recently. Many movies have been made about tragic deaths and killing. There is much interest in tragic deaths. And these types of death cause us much concern. And while Christians die, maybe even tragically, in accidents or war, and not always in their sleep, yet they die a better death. And that is why, in a way, Christians can prepare for death, expect it, and wait for it.
2. When you, a Christian, die it will put an end to your sinning. This means you will no longer be offensive 冒犯 to your Creator and Re-creator. Your Creator and Re-creator will prefer that you don't sin now while you live, but the fact is you will continue to sin. When you die, however, you will sin no more. You cannot sin in heaven. You will be confirmed in a state of righteousness – something Adam failed to achieve for his descendants, but which the 2nd Adam achieved for you. Jesus Christ will confirm you in a state of righteousness in heaven...Paradise restored.
3. When you, a Christian dies, it is your entrance into eternal life. The old song "Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die" is true for the world but not for the Christian. And for you to enjoy the greater blessings of heaven you have to give up the lesser blessings of this life. So when you die you immediately pass from death to eternal life. You don't have to spend time waiting in the grave (soul sleep)...or going through purgatory 炼狱...or some other intermediate stage. You don't go into another person or into an animal (reincarnation). You go to heaven the moment you die. There is no lesser or greater punishment for all, as Muslims believe.
John 5:24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."
1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.
Who in his right mind would not want to go to heaven? a. The shortsighted 短视 person who thinks the blessings of this life are the ultimate blessings does not want to go to heaven for greater blessings. b. The person who does not believe that there is life after death. But if you have faith as the Apostle Paul, you will know and believe with all your heart that dying is a net gain for the Christian. You get more than you have to give up. Understatement of the year.
Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.
What else accompanies eternal life in heaven? When you die you are freed from your troubles and trials of this life. You have no more diseases in your body. You don't lose your investments or suffer the loss of loved ones. You are never disappointed. (And who hasn't had a life with sadness and many disappointments?) What a comfort this was to one of my former student whose 14 year old son died this week from cancer! You are never oppressed 压迫, depressed 忧郁, or repressed 被抑制. And there is much more! You are freed from sin that lives in you. So you will have no more unbelief, doubts, and fears, and the temptations of Satan. As soon as you die you enter into God's presence and have the fullness of joy. And more: "In heaven there will be everlasting habitations, into mansions of light, life, love, joy, peace, and comfort; is at perfect rest, and surrounded with endless pleasures..."(Gill).
Philippians 1:23 For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. 24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.
4. Big question: Why would you want to live now since death seems so attractive? The Apostle Paul answered that. He loved the Lord and wanted to serve the Lord through helping believers and preaching the Gospel to non-believers. He

couldn't do these things if he died. You want to serve your wife, your husband, your children, your friends, and Christian brothers. And so you ask God for long life. Love is the force behind it. Love for your own joys will say: "Take me home now, Lord." But sacrifice will say: "I would rather be here now to serve the brothers."

4. So you can confidently say that **death is not punishment for sin.** The sting of death was destroyed by the Lord when he died on the cross. When something does not have a sting 刺 it is no longer a threat.

1Corinthians 15:54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

As young boys we would try to catch wasps 黄蜂 and then pull out their stings and scare girls with them. We knew with no stings the wasps were harmless. They didn't, so they were afraid. Now you know that death has lost its sting. Death cannot confirm you to hell.

5. You must not try to die, but you should not be afraid to die. There is no shame in death. It is a better death when you die in Jesus Christ. At death, after the race, you get the prize.

Acts 20:24 "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

A Better Death while you live

43 Q. WHAT FURTHER ADVANTAGE DO WE RECEIVE FROM CHRIST'S SACRIFICE AND DEATH ON THE CROSS? A. Through Christ's death our old selves are crucified, put to death, and buried with him, so that the evil desires of the flesh may no longer rule us, but that instead we may dedicate ourselves as an offering of gratitude to him.

1. Christ gives you the victory over sin and death because you were in him spiritually when he died and you were buried with him. **You now have the strength to "kill" sin and "kill" your sinful desires.** So you have a better death while you live...you die to sin. This is another death of joy!

Romans 6:5 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 算自己 to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I like how the Psalmist teaches this. Your redemption was costly 重价 to Christ, but its value 价值 is eternal. Your redemption was not cheap...that God could pay it with gold...or Canadian dollars.

Psalm 49:6 Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches, 7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him—8 For the redemption of their souls is costly, And it shall cease forever— 9 That he should continue to live eternally, And not see the Pit.

2. If you were spiritually united in Christ Jesus when he died, then you were in Christ Jesus when he was resurrected. This means **you are no longer a slave to spiritual death and sin.** You were freed. You now live with your new Master – the Lord Jesus Christ. This means you never have to die spiritually again - never. Jesus Christ died once for all. (So much for those who believe you can have life and then lose it. Jesus Christ cannot die again a 2nd time to give you a second life. And he did not die to give you multiple lives. And so much for Roman Catholics who believe they have to kill Jesus every day in their wicked Mass 弥撒 to atone for your sins.)

3. Because of your freedom that Christ Jesus secured for you, you now then live your life for God.

You live to please him: worship him, obey him, speak to him, listen to him, and speak for him.

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

The more you live your life for God's glory, the more you kill sin.

4. If you do let your evil desires rule over you for a time, then it is your responsibility to bear the consequences 后果.. But you never can lose you salvation.

Romans 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

But instead of fearing the consequences of sin, you will live your life for God. Two passages.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service 理所当然的事奉
Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God效法神 as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us...

5. When you now live as a Christian, you are not only able to please God, you are also able to save up a better reward in heaven. Athanasius: "Now that the common Savior of all has died on our behalf, we who believe in Christ no longer die, as men died aforetime 从前 in fulfillment of the threat of the law. That condemnation has come to an end; and now that, by the grace of the resurrection, corruption has been banished and done away, we are loosed from our mortal bodies in God's good time for each, so that we may obtain thereby a better resurrection."

6. In sum, what does dying to sin mean? In simple words, you no longer live for yourself, but you separate yourself from sin and you now live for righteousness. Death means separation.

Romans 6:10 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算 yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Conclusion:

As the redeemed of God through Jesus Christ, when you die in your body you go to heaven and cash in the capital and interest you have accrued 累积 in this life. There you will enjoy his fullness of joy and will be freed from troubles and trials that are so common in this life. But while you continue in this life you must learn to die another death: you need to die to sin daily and cash in on the benefits Jesus Christ secured for you. Jesus Christ earned your separation from sin which his blood. Do not let sin rule you. Mortify it and live in victory.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Live as the redeemed who have eternal life and a heavenly inheritance. By Christ you were healed – sin and death no longer have power over you. Live like it. If physical death comes to your door face it. Don't let it control you. Its sting has been removed and it cannot do any harm. In fact, it ushers you into that perfect place of peace and rest... that place that was purchased for you in Jesus Christ. Also, die to sin. And while you die to sin in this life, let Christ receive some of the benefits of what you are cashing in... let him receive your praises. Everything you have, including the power to destroy sin, is from him. So praise him well.

Finally: If you are not a Christian death must be a terror for you. There is life after death, but you don't have it. All you have in this world...some money...some fame...some power...but they are all gone in a short time. Only the one who relies upon the Savior and ask for new life...will enjoy eternal life. Do you want this Savior? The benefits of his work are free to those who sincerely ask.