

Minister's Message – July 2009

Death

Commenting on the death of a medical professor, a journalist wrote 'a person's dignity lies in one's ability to face reality in all its meaninglessness (*The Sydney Morning Herald* June 6). In other words, death makes life meaningless. Death continues to defy the power of man and science. When will this change? When will a journalist be able to write 'a person's dignity lies in one's ability to overcome death' rather than simply 'face the reality of death'? Will this ever happen?

'I am not frightened of dying', the professor was quoted as saying. 'I am at peace with my situation'. What situation – the situation in which death wins in the end? What sort of peace can a man have when he is defeated? What good is it to be brave when you know you face certain defeat? If this man had said he had peace with God, everything would have been different.

A man who has peace with God can truly say he is not afraid of dying. How can this be? A man can have peace with God through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). Jesus Christ defeated death. Yes, long ago a man who walked on this earth defeated death. He was not a doctor, though he healed many people and even raised some dead people. He was not a rich man with access to the best hospital in the world. He was an extraordinary man in that he was also God.

Jesus Christ the Son of God defeated death by his own death on the Cross. 'The death of death in the death of Christ' is how John Owen put it. Death came into the world because of sin. Without sin there was, and is, no death. Jesus as the Son of God had no original sin nor did he commit any sin. He died on the Cross because of our sin. But having no sin himself, he rose from the grave. It was not possible for the chains of death to hold him.

Jesus is called the second Adam. Death came into the world when the first Adam sinned by disobeying God. Death is the divine penalty for sin. Victory over death comes through Jesus. *By one man's offence death reigned though the one, but how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life though the one man Jesus Christ* (Romans 5:17).

Are you waiting for a medical scientist to discover the key to immortality? Are you waiting for visitors from another planet to bring the secret? The truth is the secret is already out. You can find it in the Bible. *Death is swallowed up in victory* (I Corinthians 15:54). It is in the 'mystery' of the gospel. Jesus conquered death some 2000 years ago. In his victory you also can have victory. You will not have to put on a brave face and stoically say, 'I am not afraid of death'.

When you believe in Jesus Christ you are made alive. You are given eternal life. The apostle Paul believed that Jesus died for his sin and that he rose from the dead when he said *for me to live is Christ and to die is gain* (Philippians 1:21). Do you understand what he meant? Paul did not face death with despair or defeat. Nor did he face death stoically. To be sure he faced death with reality, the reality of the Cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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