

To Die is Gain

Thomas Brooks

Thomas Brooks was one of those 2000 who were ejected from their parishes by the Act of Uniformity in 1662. He was a very homely and practical preacher and, before his expulsion he ministered with great effect in St. Thomas Apostles and St. Mary Magdalen in London. His numerous works (reprinted in 6 volumes by Nicholls of last century) and reprinted by the Banner of Truth more recently, include such titles as "Heaven upon Earth", "Apples of Gold", "An Ark for All God's Noahs", "Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices" and are highly esteemed for their readability and practicality. This item is a letter to a lady reprinted in his Collected Works. He died on September 27th, 1680.

Dear Lady and Sister in the Lord:

I shall now address myself to you in a few lines, and so conclude. I know you have for many years been the Lord's prisoner. Great have been your trials, and many have been your trials, and long have been your trials; but to all these I have spoken at large in my treatise called 'The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod', which you have in your hand, which you have read, and which God has greatly blessed to the support comfort, quiet, and refreshment of your soul under all your trials; and therefore I shall say no more as to those particulars. But knowing that the many weaknesses that hang upon you, and the decays of nature that daily do attend you, seem to point out an approaching dissolution, I shall at this time give you this one word of counsel, viz, that every day you would look upon death in a scripture glass, in a scripture dress or under a scripture notion: that is . . .

BEST

First, look upon death as that which is best for a believer: Phil. 1:23 "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better . . ." The Greek is very significant, "Far, far the better" or far much better, or much more better. It is a most transcendent expression. Eccles. 7:1 "Better is the day of death than the day of one's birth". A saint's dying day is the daybreak of eternal righteousness. In respect of pleasure, peace, safety, company, glory, a believer's dying day is his best day. I have read of one Trophonius, that, when he had built and dedicated that stately temple at Delphos, he asked of Apollo, for his recompense, that thing which was best for man. The oracle wished him to go home, and within three days he should have it; and within that time he died. It was an excellent saying of one of the ancients, "That is not a death, but life,

which joins the dying man to Christ; and that is not a life, but death, which separates a living man from Christ”.

REMEDY

Secondly, look upon death as a remedy, as a cure. Death will perfectly cure you of all corporeal and spiritual diseases at once: the crazy body, and the defiled soul, the aching head, and the unbelieving heart. Death will cure you of all your ails, aches, diseases, and distempers. At Strafford-Bow in Queen Mary's day, there was burned a lame man and a blind man at one stake, The lame man, after he was chained, casting away his crutch, bade the blind man be of good comfort; For death, saith he, will cure us both; thee of thy blindness and me of my lameness. And as death will cure all your bodily diseases, so it will cure all your soul distempers also. Death is not the death of the man, but the death of his sin. Death will work such a cure as all your duties, graces, experiences, ordinances, assurances, could never do; for it will at once free you full, perfectly and perpetually from all sin; yea, from all possibility of ever sinning more. Sin was the midwife that brought death into the world, and death shall be the grave to bury sin. And why, then, should a Christian be afraid to die, unwilling to die, seeing death gives him a writ of ease from infirmities and weaknesses from all aches and pains, griefs and gripings, distempers and diseases, both of body and soul? When Samson died, the Philistines also died together with him: so when a saint dies his sins die with him. Death came in by sin and sin goeth out by death; as the worm kills the worm that bred it, so death kills the sin that bred it.

REST

Thirdly, look upon death as a rest, a full rest. A believer's dying day is his resting day. It is a resting day from sin, sorrow, afflictions, temptations, desertions, dissensions, vexations, oppositions, and persecutions. This world was never made to be the saints' rest. Arise, for this is not your resting-place. They are like Noah's dove, they can rest nowhere, but in the ark and in the grave. 'In the grave' saith Job, 'the weary are at rest'. Upon this very ground some of the most refined heathens have accounted mortality to be a mercy, for they brought their friends into the world with mournful obsequies, but carried them out of the world with all joyful sports and pastimes, because then they conceived they were at rest, and out of gunshot. Death brings the saints to a full rest, to a pleasant rest, to a matchless rest, to an eternal rest.

REAPING

Fourthly look upon your dying day as a reaping day. 2 Cor. 9:2 Gal. 6:7-9; Isa. 38:3; Matt. 25:31, 41. Now you shall reap the fruit of all the prayers that ever you

have made, and of all the tears that ever you have shed, and of all the sighs and groans that ever you have fetched, and of all the good words that ever you have spoken, and of all the good works that ever you have done, and of all the great things that ever you have suffered. When mortality shall put on immortality, you shall then reap a plentiful crop, a glorious crop, as the fruit of all that good seed that for a time hath seemed to be buried and lost. Eccles. 11:1, 6. As Christ hath a tender heart and a soft hand, so he hath an iron memory; he punctually remembers all the sorrows, and all the services, and all the sufferings of his people, to reward them and crown them (Rev. 22:12).

GAIN

Fifthly, look upon your dying day as a gainful day. There is no gain to that which comes in by death. Phil. 1:21, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain". A Christian gets more by death than he doth by life, Eccles. 7:1, to be in Christ is very good, but to be with Christ is best of all, Phil. 1:23. It was a mighty blessing for Christ to be with Paul on earth, but it was the top of blessings for Paul to be with Christ in heaven. Seriously consider of a few things:

First: that by death you shall gain **incomparable crowns**.

- A crown of life (Rev.2:10, James 1:12)
- A crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8)
- An incorruptible crown (I Cor. 9:24,25)
- A crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4)

Now there are no crowns to these crowns, as I have fully discovered in my discourse on "The Divine Presence" to which I refer you.

Secondly: You shall gain a **glorious kingdom**. Luke 12:32, 'It is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom'. But death is the young prophet that anointeth them to it, and giveth them actual possession of it. They must put off their rags of mortality, that they may put on the robes of glory. Israel must first die in Egypt before he can be carried into Canaan. There is no entering into paradise but under the flaming sword of this angel death, who standeth at the gate. Death is the dirty lane through which the saint passeth to a kingdom, to a great kingdom, to a glorious kingdom, to a quiet kingdom, to an unshaken kingdom, to a durable kingdom, to a lasting kingdom, yea, to an everlasting kingdom; Death is a dark, short way, through which the saints pass to the marriage-supper of the Lamb (Heb. 12:28, Dan. 2:44, and 4:3, Rev. 19:7)

Thirdly: You will gain a **safe and honourable convoy into that other world** (Luke 16:22) Oh, in what pomp and triumph did Lazarus ride to heaven on the wings of angels! The angels conduct the saints at death through the air, the devil's region, every gracious soul is carried into Christ's presence by these

heavenly courtiers. Oh, what a sudden change does death make! behold, he that even now was scorned by men, is all on a sudden, carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.

Fourthly: You shall gain a **glorious welcome**, a joyful welcome a wonderful welcome into heaven. By general consent of all antiquity, the holy angels and blessed Trinity rejoice at the sinner's conversion; but oh, what inexpressible, what transcendent joy is there, when a saint is landed upon the shore of eternity (Rev. 4:8-11; Luke 15:7, 10; Heb. 12:23). God and Christ, angels and archangels, all stand ready to welcome a believer as soon as his feet are upon the threshold of glory. God the Father welcomes the saints as his elect and chosen ones, Jesus Christ welcomes them as his redeemed and purchased ones, and the Holy Spirit welcomes them as his sanctified and renewed ones, and the blessed angels welcome them as those they have guarded and attended on (Heb. 1:14). When the saints enter upon the suburbs of glory, the glorious angels welcome them with harps in their hands, and ditties in their mouths.

Fifthly: You shall gain **full freedom and liberty from all your enemies within and without** — viz. sin, Satan, and the world. (Luke 1:70, 71, 74, 75).

- Death will free you from the indwelling power of sin (Romans 7:23). In heaven there is no complaints. As in hell there is nothing but wickedness, so in heaven there is nothing but holiness.
- Death will free you from the power and prevalency of sin. Here sin is the tyrant, but in heaven there is no tyranny, but perfect felicity.
- Death will free you from all provocations, temptations, and suggestions to sin. Now you shall be above all Satan's batteries. Now God will make good the promise of treading Satan under your feet, Rom. 16:20. Some say serpents will not live in Ireland. The old serpent is cast out, and shall be for ever kept out of the new Jerusalem above (Rev. 12:8,9 and 21:27).
- Death will free you from all the effects and consequents of sin — viz, losses, crosses, sicknesses, diseases, disgraces, sufferings etc. When the cause is taken away, the effect ceases; when the fountain of sin is dried up, the streams of afflictions of sufferings, must be dried up too; the fuel being taken away the fire will go out of itself. Sin and sorrow were born together do live together, and shall die together. To open this fourth particular a little more fully to you consider these four things:

FREEDOM

First, that death will free you from **all reproach and ignominy on your names**. Now Elijah is accounted the troubler of Israel, Nehemiah a rebel against his king, and David the song of the drunkards, and Jeremiah a man of contention, and Paul a pestilent fellow. Heaven wipes away all blots, as well as all tears; as no

sins, so no blots are to be found in the upper world. The names of all the saints in a state of glory are written, as I may say, in characters of gold.

Secondly, death will free you from **all bodily infirmities and diseases**. We carry about in our bodies the matter of a thousand deaths, and may die a thousand several ways each several hour. As many senses, as many members, nay, as many pores as there are in the body, so many windows there are for death to enter at. Death needs not spend all its arrows upon us; a worm, a gnat a fly, a hair, the stone of a raisin, the kernel of a grape, the fall of a horse, the stumbling of a foot, the prick of a pin, the paring of a nail, the cutting of a corn; all these have been to others and any one of them may be to us, the means of our death, within the space of a few days, nay, of a few hours. Here Job had his blotches, and Hezekiah had his boil, and David his wounds, and Lazarus his sores, and the poor widow her issue of blood. Now the fever burns up some, and the dropsy drowns others, and the vapours stifle others; one dies of an apoplexy in the head, another of a struma in the neck, a third of quinsey in the throat, and a fourth of a cough and consumption of the lungs; others of obstructions, inflammations, pleurisies, gouts etc. We are commonly full of complaints; one complains of his distemper, and another of that; one of his disease and another of his; but death will cure us all of disease and distempers at once.

Thirdly, Death will free you from **all your sorrows, whether inward or outward, whether for your own sins or the sins of others, whether for your own sufferings or the sufferings of others**. (Ps. 38:18; 2 Cor. 7:11; Ps. 119:136; Neh. 1:3, 4). Now it may be, one shall seldom find you but with tears in your eyes, or sorrow in your heart; Oh, but now death will be the funeral of all your sorrows, death will wipe all tears from your eyes, “and sorrow and mourning shall flee away”. (Isa. 51:11).

Fourthly, Death will free you from **all those troubles, calamities, miseries, mischiefs, and desolations, that are a-coming upon the earth, or upon this place or that**, (Isa. 57:1, Micah 7:1-7). A year after Methuselah's death, the flood came and carried away the old world. Augustine died a little before the sacking of Hippo. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem¹ and Luther himself died a little before the wars brake forth in Germany. Dear lady, death shall do that for you, which all your physicians could never do for you, which all your relations could never do for you, which all ordinances could never do for you, nor which all your faithful ministers could never do for you. It shall both instantly and perfectly cure you of all sorts of maladies and weaknesses, both inward and outward, or that respects either' your

¹ EDITOR 'S NOTE: we believe Luther to be in error when he claims that no apostle remained alive at the destruction of Jerusalem. John, the writer of the Fourth Gospel, not only was alive at that time, but he lived to write his gospel, probably in the last decade of the first century.

body or your soul, or both. O my dear friend, is it not better to die, and be rid of all sin; to die, and be rid of all temptations and desertions; to die and be rid of all sorts of miseries; than to live, and still carry about with us our sins, our burdens, and such constant ailments, as takes away all the pleasure and comfort of life? Here both our outward and inward conditions are very various; sometimes heaven is open and sometimes heaven is shut; sometimes we see the face of God and rejoice, and at other times he hides his face, and we are troubled (Lam. 3:8,44, 54-57; Ps. 30:7; 1 Thes. 4:17,18; Isa. 35:10). Oh, but now death will bring us to an invariable eternity. It is always day in heaven, and joy in heaven.

CLEAR KNOWLEDGE

Sixthly, you shall gain a **clear, distinct, and full knowledge of all great and deep mysteries** (1 Cor. 13:10,12). The mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of Christ's incarnation, the mystery of man's redemption, the mysteries of providences, the mysteries of prophecies, and all those mysteries that relate to the nature, substances, offices, order and excellencies of the angels.

SLEEP

Look upon death as a sleep. The Holy Ghost hath phrased it so above twenty times in Scripture, to shew that this is the proper, true and genuine notion of death. When the saints die, they do but sleep: Matt. 9:24 'The maid is not dead, but sleepeth'. The same phrase he also used to his disciples concerning Lazarus, 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth' (John 11:11). The death of the godly is as a sleep; Stephen fell asleep (Acts 7:60); and 'David fell asleep' (Acts 13:36); and 'Christ is the first fruits of them that sleep' (1 Cor. 15:20); 'Them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him' (1 Thes. 4:14). The saints of God do but sleep when they lie down in the grave. That which we call death in such, is not death indeed; it is but the image of death the shadow and metaphor of death, death's younger brother, a mere sleep, and no more. I may not follow the analogy that is between death and sleep in the latitude of it, the printer calling upon me to conclude. Sleep is the nurse of nature, the sweet parenthesis of all a man's griefs and cares.

DEPARTURE

Look upon death as a departure (2 Tim. 4:6) 'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.' He makes nothing of death. It was no more betwixt God and Moses, but go up and die (Deut. 32:49,50); and so betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better'. Paul longed for that hour wherein he should loose anchor, and sail to Christ, as the Greek word imports. It is a metaphor from a ship at anchor, importing a sailing

from this present life to another port. Paul had a desire to loose from the shore of life, and to launch out into the main of immortality. The apostle, in this phrase, hath a reference both to his bonds and to his death; and his meaning is, I desire to be discharged and released, as out of a common jail, so also out of the prison of my body, that I may presently be with Christ my Saviour in heaven, in rest and bliss. After Paul had been in the third heaven, his constant song was, 'I desire to be with Christ'. Nature teacheth that death is the end of misery; but grace will teach us that death is the beginning of our felicity.

GOING TO BED

Lastly, look upon death as a going to bed. The grave is a bed wherein the body is laid to rest, with its curtains close drawn about it, that it may not be disturbed in repose: so the Holy Ghost is pleased to phrase it: 'He shall enter into peace., they shall rest in their beds, everyone walking in their uprightness' (Isa. 57:2). As the souls of the saints pass into a place of rest and bliss, so their bodies are laid down to rest in the grave, as in a bed or bedchamber, there to sleep quietly until the morning of the resurrection. Death is nothing else but a writ-of-ease to the weary saints; it is a total cessation from all their labour of nature, sin and affliction. 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours' (Rev. 14:13 etc) Whilst the souls of the saints do rest in Abraham's bosom, their bodies do sweetly hope in their beds of dust, as in a safe and consecrated dormitory. Every sincere Christian may, like the weary child, call and cry to be laid to bed, knowing that death would send him to his everlasting rest. Now you should always look upon death under scripture notions, and this will take off the terror of death; yea, it will make the king of terrors to be the king of desires; it will make you not only willing to die, but even long to die, and to cry out 'Oh that I had the wings of a dove, to fly away and be at rest!' At death you shall have an eternal jubilee, and be freed from all incumbrances. Now sin shall be no more, nor trouble shall be no more, nor pain nor ailments shall be no more. Now you will have your rest, now 'the wicked shall cease from troubling, and now the weary shall be at rest (Job 3:17). Now 'all tears shall be wiped from your eyes' (Rev. 7:17), now death shall be the way to bliss, the gate of life, and the portal to paradise. It was well said of one, so far as we tremble at death, so far we want love. It is sad, when the contract is made between Christ and a Christian, to see a Christian afraid of the making up the marriage. Lord, saith Augustine, I will die that I may enjoy thee; I will not live, but I will die, I desire to die, that I may see Christ and refuse to live, that I may live with Christ. The broken rings, contracts, and espousals contents not the true lover, but he longs for the marriage day. It is no credit to your heavenly Father for you to be loath to go home. The Turks tell us that surely Christians do not believe heaven to be such a glorious place as they talk of; for if they did, they would not be so unwilling to go thither. The world may well think that the child hath but cold welcome at his father's house, that he lingers so much by the way, and that he does not look and long to be home. Such children bring an ill report upon their father's house, upon the holy land; but

I know you have not so learned Christ, I know you long with Paul, 'to be dissolved, and to be with Christ' (Phil. 1:23) and with old Simeon, to cry our, Lord let thy servant depart in peace' (Luke 2:29). That God whom you have long sought and served will make your passage into that other world safe, sweet and easy. Now to the everlasting arms of divine protection, and to the constant guidance and leadings of the Spirit, and to the rich influences of Christ's sovereign grace, and to the lively, hopes of the inheritance of the saints in light, he commends you, who is, dear sister, yours in the strongest bonds.

Thomas Brooks.

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