

## Death is Ours

G. V. Wigram.

CBA11,292

Publishers: George Morrish.

"All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. 3: 22, 23.)

A friend lately used to me this expression, "*Death is a terrible monster. I hate it.*" My soul replied, "What and where should I be, but for that terrible monster of *your* hate?" Death is mine in the highest sense; not merely in the lower sense, that, as it is appointed unto men once to die, *I may* have to die; but, in the highest sense, death is mine; for death itself, in the divine use of it — in the way God has used it, has been, and is marvellously mine, my own: my boast and my song.

And to what can I turn first, when speaking on this subject, so well as to the blessed Lord's death? — "The Lord's death" (1 Cor. 11: 26); "the death of God's Son" (Rom. 5: 10); the death of "the Prince of Life" (Acts 3: 15), are expressions that may well usher in the wondrous roll. "I am the Resurrection and the Life," said the Lord. But He could not in His own Person be the Resurrection without death first; nor, according to divine counsels, was He to, take openly the place of being the Life, the last Adam the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15), without first dying. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12: 24.) "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No one taketh 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. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10: 17, 18.) And all through His course He could say, "I have a baptism to be baptised with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" (Luke 12: 50.) For the goal of His course who had come, as Son of God, down from the divine glory as displayed in heaven above, to become the Son of man here on earth, was "death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2: 9.) Marvel of marvels, and wonder inexplicable to human reason! The Son of God — He who created all things, and upheld all things — the appointed judge of quick and dead, was, as Son of man, crucified through weakness! (2 Cor. 13: 4.) And never did His divine glory shine out more brightly than then. A creature, however high, has no right to leave the sphere assigned to it — its own proper sphere. The Son of God had no such restraint upon Him. He had the right to be worshipped in the heavens, and the right, if He would, to be hanged as the Son of man on the cross. Creature-glory consists in honour put upon it. Divine glory showed itself here in His divesting Himself of all external glory as attached to sphere or place, emptying Himself that He might show the perfect expression of sympathy with His Father's mind. He was one counsel with Him. He would show it in death, the death of the cross. And death, the wages of sin to Adam the first, was, in the case of the last Adam, the Son's payment (in love, how free) of tribute to divine counsels the expression of the perfect sympathy of the Son of God as Son of man with the Father's vindication of His own character against the world and Satan, and the whole fallen human race. That cross on Calvary issuing hereafter in the all-pervading glory of the Lamb that was slain, alive and at God's right hand — shows (blessed Lord!) death, death in its most awfully magnified expression, even Thy death, to be mine, my very own — my boast, my glory. If none other claim it, yet do I: monstrous, but not terrible; nor to be hated, for it was *Thy* death.

Secondly. — But I must remark, further, that it was thus the glory of God, as the *God of Resurrection*, was brought out to light. Eden, with man in innocency, proclaimed the eternal power and godhead; and after the Deluge, in the Rainbow Covenant, the sign of the long-suffering patience of God

to a world in wickedness came out to light. But Eden and Innocency I have lost; and mercies to me as a sinner in time will not answer the question of sin, nor save me from the wrath to come. But the death of the Lord Jesus was the lowly portal through which flowed forth the light of the glory of God as the God of Resurrection, and of a Resurrection from among the dead. First, He that died became Lord of All, in the wide universe; and should sit upon the throne judging, in God's own proper eternity, all men, raised again, at the general resurrection. That glory is certainly His as Son of man. "For the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (John 5: 28, 29.) Awful thought, to be brought up by the irresistible power of the Lord to answer for all deeds and thoughts done in the body, in this life. But, secondly, blessed be God, if the light of the great white throne is seen, we know also that there is, in Him who will sit thereon and judge, also a first resurrection. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead [morally dead in trespasses and sins] shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself!" (Vers. 24-26.) Save as a result of His death, it never could have been written: "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this, the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9: 27, 28); and the unfolded results, in circumstances, of that lowly death, are the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness — for which we, according to His promise, wait. (2 Peter 3: 13.)

God raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. (Rom. 4: 24.) "By him we believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God." (1 Peter 1: 21.) Oh what should I be, or where should I be, as to salvation, as to trust for present deliverance, as to hope, if the glory of God, as the God of Resurrection, had not been brought out to light? and how has it been brought forth to light, but by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from among the dead? The fruits of His death, how precious!

Thirdly. — But not only is there light, the light of Life, found in His death; but, more than that, this light so found is a light in which all the dark things get exposed, their true character discovered, their power neutralised; Satan, the world, man, all are made manifest by the death of the Lord Jesus; and their power set aside, too, to faith. It was thus Satan was met, nullified, and his power set aside. "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." (Heb. 2: 14, 15.)

It was His death to which the Lord referred when He said, "Now shall the Prince of this world be cast out." (John 12: 31.) And this world has its judgment in that same death, "Now is the judgment of this world" — judgment made good in the blessing, too, of the believer, as Paul said, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6: 14.) It is there, too, that flesh, with the life that is in the blood, gets its measure and true stamp. When He gave up His life a ransom for us, He showed the perfection of flesh and the vileness of flesh in one and the same act. In Himself, He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sin. Justice could find nothing in Him to find fault with; He was the only One that could not justly be forsaken, on account of what He Himself was. In Him all was perfect. He could not bear our sins in His own body on the tree. But in that which He underwent on the cross, in death, there was the expression, from men who did it, of their being at enmity with God and under the power of Satan,

and also, in the forsaking of Him by God at the same time, there was God's measured estimate of our sin. The just One — Substitute for the many unjust — took the cup of wrath at the Father's hands; and, in crying out, "My God, My God! why hast thou forsaken me?" gave the true measure, divinely full and perfect, of what fallen man is in the estimate of God. With mine eye on Him, I cannot say, "Death is a terrible monster. I hate it." His death — death in the fullest expression of it — death as He only could present it, is most precious and marvellous. God is a God of wonders. And to wonder at Him well becomes a creature in His presence. I wonder at Him; yea, am lost in wonder, when I think of death, the Lord's death; open cleft through which all the glory of the God of Resurrection has poured; has streamed down upon flesh, the world, and Satan, and made me, even me, to be able to say, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

Fourthly. — But if the spring-tide of death (death in itself) there, where it is worst, and has told forth its awful power, between God and the Son of man as the Substitute, told its tale in a way that leaves the believer blessed in the hearing of it, yet conscious that there is an eternal, a divine height and depth in the subject which passeth all understanding; what shall we say as to the waves or the ripples of death? Surely faith says "In all things more than conquerors, through him that loved us." (Rom. 8: 37.) I am Christ's and Christ is God's. Sheltered in the Rock that was smitten, the dark shadow of death is not to rest upon me, upon my conscience, upon my thoughts:

Christ died! then I am clean

"Not a spot within."

God's mercy and love

"Not a cloud above."

'Tis the spirit, through faith, thus triumphs o'er sin;

"Not a cloud above. Not a spot within."

The Son, now upon the Father's throne, in the glory which He had with Him before the world was — eternal, without beginning — has made me, through His death, as free from all the guilt that did rest upon me, as He Himself was always personally free from guilt. God had never anything against Him. He has now, through that death, nothing against me. He always found His good pleasure in the Son of His love. Wondrous, but true; He, even now, finds His good pleasure in me in that Christ. I count myself His purchase; put apart by Him for His own glory. He took occasion of the circumstances of the fall to bring out the compassion and mercy and grace of God; and showed amid the ruins of the first creation, His own competency to deal with God about the question of sin and Satan; of the fallen world and of man. His work of humiliation is ended; but how does it all tell of His personal competency to meet every question.

Gone on high now, He uses our position, in the wilderness that lies between an Egyptian world of bondage and the glory, as the occasion to teach us Himself and to teach us our own selves, too. And shortly, when it is glory come, He will Himself put the finishing touch to the work, and show out the faithfulness of His love to the people of His choice; and this He will do at least a thousand years before the new creation shall be put forth as the expression of His competency to finish that which He takes in hand. And to what am I set aside, individually, but to be an occasion in which, according to divine wisdom, the personal glories of the Son as being the Resurrection and the Life are to find their expression. He has given me life, eternal life, a life which He Himself is, as He is, in resurrection and ascension-glory. If, ere He rises up from the Father's right hand, He call me, I die; but I know that the "I die" means only "to all that is mortal," to all that is corruptible down here, that I cease for ever,

according to God, to have connection with any such things as mortality or corruptibility; and, absent from the body, am present with the Lord — there to await *with Himself* that time when He shall put forth His glory as the resurrection — openly put it forth, and my body shall then rise a glorified body to meet Him in the air. If He calls me not until He has risen up, then I shall never see separation of body and soul at all, but His life-giving power, which has already given to my soul a life, in the power of which I could cast off a body of death, shall fill all up with life, and push mortality and corruptibility out of my body, without its ever being separated from the already life-possessed soul. But is absence from pilgrim scenes and from a body of sin — if changed for presence with the Lord, and being "at home" — is this *death*? Unbelief speaks oft as if it were so; just as if the new place Christ has opened, in which it is far better to be, so far as we are concerned, were little; as though the curtained character of the intermediate state of which Hezekiah spake (Isa. 38.) still continued, now that life and immortality have been brought to light through the gospel. With a conscience set free by faith in a risen and ascended Lord, and with the flow of joy which the ungrieved Spirit of God gives to a heavenly man who is a Son of God, what is the fever of disease? what the clammy feel of the body when its life is flickering in the socket? — the eternal life within centering the heart and mind the meanwhile upon the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself on high. Yes; but there is a coffin before us, and there rests the body of an aged and devoted saint, happy in the Lord among us, and full of love to His saints, and now gone! Aye, but gone whither? To the Lord Jesus. Is He not worthy to have His saints with Him? Has He, think you, forestalled God's counsel in calling this one "home," home to Himself — Himself the "home?" Not so. The words "if ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I," may be quoted here as true in this case also. Or have we no love for those that go; no love save for our own selves; no willingness to see *them* blessed, if their blessing cost us any privation? It is vile, wretched selfishness, which forgets God's joy and Christ's joy in welcoming to His presence a soul that leaves us which hinders, too, our thinking of *its* great gain, and keeps us absorbed with our own selves and our loss. Well may you who thus, full of your own selves, forget God and Christ and the friends you profess to have loved — well may you be indignant against your own selfishness and your own narrow-hearted love of self. But there is a jealousy of love in God. He wills that your hearts should know the sufficiency of Christ to satisfy you amid all the writhings experienced in the wilderness. He wills, in that jealousy of love, that you should think of Him to whom He has espoused you, and of His joy over those that sleep in Him; and that you should learn how to think and feel according to that sphere in which Christ is now as its very centre.

What can I tell you about the blessedness of the departed? I can only answer this by another question: What do you know of the attractiveness of Christ; of the blessedness of being with the Lord? For if self and selfishness fill you, why, then, *they* find *their* aliment in this world; and if you are full of yourself, of your likes and dislikes, your gains and losses, you will not profit much from the doctrine of the blessedness of those absent from the body and present with the Lord. It does not suit you in your selfishness, and you may not like to be challenged as to whether you find more attractiveness in Christ than in all else. "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise," was the Lord's blessed word to the converted thief. What did the poor thief know of Paradise, or its blessedness? Probably nothing at all. But he had just made a new friend in One whose fellow there was not to be found. Faith had revealed to him the open and attracting heart of the blessed Lord. His faith had opened the thief's heart to holiness and to confession, and to trust in His judge, and had drawn into it the sweetness of the promises of inseparableness from that Saviour — "Verily, I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with *me* in Paradise." (Luke. 23: 45.) "With Him," that was enough. "Absent from the body, and present [at home] with the Lord." (2 Cor. 5: 3), was the *far better* which Paul knew as to the state of a departed saint. Aye, and of the glory; what description comes up to it, like that, "And so shall we ever be *with* the Lord." (1 Thess.

4: 17.) But this throws us upon the question of the measure of our knowledge and appreciation of our Lord Jesus Christ? Those who know and make much of Him will find much in the thought of being *with* Him. They have His Spirit, and they walk in it; and to Him there is for a saint nothing like "presence with the Lord." If self rules in us, we must have circumstances and details, so as to be able to pick up what suits man when thinking of himself and his circumstances.

But, if you love a saint that has just gone on high, like Stephen, let the thought of the joy of the one you love who did appreciate the Lord's presence and the taste of it, have some small place in your heart and mind. Happy now is that one in the realised presence of the Lord. If you loved, let the present blessedness of that one you loved, now in the presence of the Lord, counterbalance your sense of your own loss, your own bereavement. It is a little while, it may be a very, very little while, ere the Lord shall rise up. If He did so now, that body would not be interred, but rise to life and glory, and you should be changed and mount up together in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord. When we meet the Lord, we shall know Him, though we never saw Him before. No mistake. In God's presence no second person can ever be mistaken for Him. He will know all His around Him in that day, and they will know one another.

There is a monstrous abortion of unbelief in many minds now, that because earthly ties and relationships cease in heaven, persons will not be known, or our mutual interest not sustained. The stupid folly of the thought is superficial. I know and love and am known and loved by many who were once either my masters or my servants upon earth; the relationship has passed, but thank God not the mutual love and esteem which our hearts formed in it. A child, when married, ceases to be a child in the parent's house; he or she is, according to God, absolved from the tie, but the love and interest go on. Or does a married daughter cease to be loved because she has taken headship under another, and has not the tie and responsibility of a child in the house? In divorce, would the pain and agony of the past relationship cease to a loving heart because God had pronounced the tie of man and wife to have been broken? Paul's former tie with the Thessalonians may cease; but not his love of them, or theirs of him, as formed when both were on earth. They will be round him in the glory, his joy, a crown of rejoicing. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (1 Thess. 2: 19.) See also the expression: "Sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." (1 Thess. 4: 13.) The condition of those who cannot see this is carnal; occupied with themselves and circumstances, they cannot see afar off, they cannot enter into the Lord's joys and grace.

There is but one thing more that I would add. It may be said to me by some: "According to you, as it seems to us, Death is then nothing." To this I would reply: Not so, by any means. Let death be what it may, Christ is, more; and He makes the dark to be light, and the bitter to be sweet. One that is in Christ, and such a one only, can say: "In all things more than conquerors through him that loved us." Such a one only can say: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Death in man was the fruit of sin; in death of the body there was an awful expression of how sin had brought in destructive ruin upon the body of man, and it then pointed on to that second death, "where the worm dieth not, and where their fire is not quenched." If the Son of God, as Son of man, has met the difficulties of the predicament in which man as a sinner was, He, in meeting, and bearing in Himself the judgment due to the sinner, did not, He could not, morally or judicially, make nothing of sin. On the contrary, when He bare the judgment due to our sins on the cross, there was plainly shown that the wages of sin are far more awful, as I judge, than man ever thought, or ever can know, or show them to be, even in the final casting of the sinner out of God's presence into the lake of fire and brimstone, prepared for the devil and his angels. The cross of Christ proved that there could be no inter-

communion, even between the Son of man, faithful in His service, and God — no light from God given to Him, whilst He held the place of being the sinner's substitute. He cried out: "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" But He overcame, though having to lay down His life in the pathway of victory. None of the judgment of sin remains to be poured out on the soul of one that believes in Christ Jesus. His judgment was our deliverance; but if delivered, we are not as yet, as we well know, exempt from bodies of sin and of death. Now we bear about in the body, however, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in our body; and, if called to depart and leave the body, the Lord can show Himself to His people as He did to Stephen. And come what may, to depart is far better; it is to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord, and to be assimilated in experience to any part of our Lord's course here below, so far as a saved disciple can be, is not strange, though blessed. Now we believe that Jesus died, as well as that He rose again. If I look upon His death as connected with the bearing of the wrath due to me, I say that is finished; and faith in me shuts out the thought of my ever tasting it. In that sense, I shall never taste death. If I look upon His death as His act of ceasing to dwell among men down here on earth, in a body that could die, the hour was one of deliverance to Him, and why is it not to be so, through Him, to me?

[Another copy (CBA12095), published by E. E. Crocker, has A.P.C. here, although it has 'By G.V.W.' on the Title Page.]

14: 3: 64.

"'Tis not  
So much as e'en the lifting of a latch -  
Only a step into the open air  
Out of a tent already luminous  
With light that shines through its transparent walls."

---

Lord! who can pay the mighty debt  
Of love so rich as Thine!  
Love — which surpasseth finding out,  
Unspeakable, divine?

POETRY.

Can the jewel e'er regret  
Her rock-bound prison home — when set  
In gold and brilliants richly met?  
Such our love's jewel! rich and bright  
In heaven's fair setting; in His light,  
Who fashion'd it for His own sight.  
The tie He wove from nature's loom  
Hath link'd us in that training room

Where links are forged that mock the tomb.

Yes! links of gold without alloy

Which time nor death can e'er destroy:

From Him, our life, our common joy.

What music in that holy sphere,

Like that which had its key-note here;

Which, 'mid earth's din, beat soft and clear?

And such was ours — such will it be,

Eternal music! For 'tis *He*

Whose master-hand hath set the key.

From "*The Widow's Mite.*"