



Sunday, February 7, 2021

---

# WEST VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

---

*Editor's Note: I wrote this article over a decade ago. It's a pretty straightforward reminder that's important for me right now. As many of you know, my Mom is at the hospital as I write this and death is a very real possibility. However, I'm thankful that she was able to say to the doctor before she lost cognizance (at least for the time being) that she didn't want to be resuscitated so she could go to heaven. The Gospel gives her (and me) that hope.*

## How Can One Find Comfort in the Face of Death?

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Approached with the debilitating dilemma of death knocking at the door, many individuals are filled with despair. There seems to them to be no practical answer for the inevitable call of death, and certainly no comfort to be found.

Many people live their lives without considering the prospect of death, adopting, as two songs respectively stated, a "Live and Let Die"/ "Que Sera, Sera (Whatever Will Be, Will Be)" mindset. In reality, unless death comes suddenly and unexpectedly, this mindset is abandoned when death is near, because it offers no comfort in the face of a vast unknown. Many, who before lived their lives without considering the prospect of death, die acknowledging and yet fearing the reality of a higher power and an afterlife. Truly, "God has shown it to them. Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:19, 20). However, even those who make this acknowledgement rarely understand the true impact of Paul's statement, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

While they may not understand it, there are many that have at least an inkling of what it means. Those who are, at the very least, religiously minded realize that evil, or sin, deserves punishment. Whether they believe in karma, purgatory, retribution, reincarnation, or some other doctrine, they believe that evil does have its wages or results, or, as Paul by inspiration so aptly stated, that "God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). The religiously minded man therefore believes that punishment is coming to those who work evil around him, yet, like the man who had no knowledge or gave no consideration to this fact before death, he is left with no real comfort. There is no answer to the problem of death in his life.

Those who understand the true Biblical perspective of this divine law of sowing and reaping see something more than what can be seen by human eyes or comprehended by human minds: the concept of eternal wages and eternal retribution for evil. This retribution is Hell. The Bible reveals that Hell is everlasting in duration; it is eternal separation from God and all that is good. It is apparent to those who understand this that if you serve sin, the reward for your service will be death. Yet, even with this knowledge, the person who tries to face death alone or with some earthly help is no different than either the merely religiously minded person or the completely worldly person. He too will be without comfort; he too will cry, in prospect of the reality and inevitability of death, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24).

"But how can a man be righteous before God?" (Job 9:2). Indeed, how can a sinful man find justification in the eyes of an infinite and righteous God? How can he find comfort in the coming of death? It is impossible for mortal man to place God in his debt or to present something to God so that He would turn aside His justice against sin.



(continued from page 1)

There is no such thing as meritorious salvation, for as Paul wrote in reference to the Law of Moses: “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight” (Romans 3:20). If man could not “work” salvation under a Law system given by God, it is impossible to think that he could “work” it under any system. “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24). Paul has but one answer: “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:25).

One who is justified by Christ need fear neither death nor its wages, for as Paul contrasted, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). The man who does not know God, the man who is merely religiously minded, and the man who knows the God of the Bible but does not obey Him are all in the same category – unjustified and therefore either fearful or ignorant concerning the danger of death. However, the man who is justified by Christ can approach death with immense comfort. What is the source of this great comfort? God: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28).

How does He work all things together for good, or through what means does He justify man? It is only through the Gospel, God’s one and only power to salvation (Romans 1:16-17). If we therefore wish to be comforted in this life regarding the problem of death, we must have real, obedient faith in the Gospel.

---