

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Talking to Death

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Have you ever talked to death? God through His prophet Hosea did. The northern kingdom of Israel was facing captivity and destruction. They had turned from God and were following the ways of idolatry set before them by their kings. In His wrath God was taking their king. Death was as certain as the travail of a woman in childbirth, but with added certainty, like a woman in travail when the child will not come forth. But God looks ahead to the time He will ransom His people from the grave. He will ransom His people. He will not change his mind. This is when He says to death, “*O death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction?*” (Hosea 13:4).

Some 800 years later God again talks to death through the inspired writing of Paul. We know from Paul that this challenging question to death is rhetorically asked, for we know the answer. Paul writes, “*O death, where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (I Corinthians 15:55-57).

We know through the gospel message that Jesus gives us the victory over death through His death. He ransomed us from sin through

the shedding of His blood upon the cross. He, as an unblemished sacrificial lamb, redeemed us with his precious blood (I Peter 1:19). He not only took away death’s sting, but also its power, the law. Sin has no sting without the power of the law. Paul makes it clear, “*for apart from the law, sin is dead*” (Romans 7:8). When Jesus was nailed to the cross, He symbolically took the condemnation of the law away, “*nauling it to the cross*” (Colossians 2:14).

But death’s sting would have continued to inflict us if Jesus were not raised from the grave (I Corinthians 15:17). The New Testament records Jesus raising three people from the dead: a widow’s only son in Nain (Luke 7:14-15), Jairus’ twelve-year old daughter (Luke 8:42, 49-55) and Lazarus, His friend (John 11:40-44). However, the clutches of death would have continued to sting in death if it were not for one more resurrection: Jesus raising Himself from the grave (Jn. 10:17-18).

God spoke to death through Hosea, and then Paul through the work of Christ to lay down before death the truth: death does not win in the end. We do through Jesus Christ. The everlasting victory occurs when Jesus returns, and all are raised from the dead. Those “doing good” in following Christ will be

raised “to life,” while those doing “evil” will be raised to “judgment” (John 5:29). When we rise to put on “incorruption” and “immortality” we can say to death, “*where is your victory?*” (I Corinthians 15:55).

Death is insatiable, ravenous for one more and never running out of room to place the next victim (cf. Proverbs 27:20). Death is scary, for we know we are powerless to resist the day of our death (Ecclesiastes 7:8). But in Christ we can meet death’s appointment with the confidence that Jesus has overcome the Devil and his power of death (Hebrews 2:14).

Death has expanded his voracious appetite in claiming over 250,000 people in our country with a new pandemic. Sadly, most, if not all of this number have had to face death alone without the physical presence of loved ones immediately by their side. Yes, death, you have created a new category, making my family feel helpless and frustrated with rules forced upon them by authorities. Yes, all are praying fervently that you will leave me be. But come a little closer. I have something to say to you: “*O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*” In a moment, the detached machinery and tubes may look like you won. But you and I both know I am victorious in Christ!