



Is the Christian's Hope real?

HOW CHRISTIANS DIE:

In one of the great art galleries, there stands a large bronze bas-relief called "The Sculptor and the Angel of Death." It portrays a young, ambitious sculptor busy working on a block of marble. Already he has carved into it the life-like face of a man, and he is anxious to complete this statue which the world will acclaim as his greatest.

But, with his chisel carefully placed and an uplifted mallet ready to strike, the angel of death has suddenly appeared, touches him on the shoulder, and bids him stop. With a look of surprise and dismay, he realizes that that sculpture—and all his other work—will now end. For the young man is about to die.

In this article we will deal with facts—facts about real people and real life outside the research laboratories. Scientists are not certain how to analyze human experience; they tell us that they have a hard time quantifying it in a test tube.

Yet our lives are as real as the rest of the world about us. There are facts about birth, life, and death—and how people relate to them. There are facts about the living of our lives which point to the existence of God, His guidance, and intervention in the affairs of men. In this article, we will briefly consider death.

Scientists tell us they cannot measure data indicating relationships with the Creator. Yet there is a lot of it available, and it clearly points in one direction. For example, which group of people are the most interested in preserving the life of the unborn? It is the Christians. Other groups, in general, are far less concerned about whether abortions are carried out. Which group generally has happier lives? It is the Christians, and it matters not whether theirs is a life of poverty or wealth. Which group has the greatest peace of heart? It is the Christians. Which group commits the fewest felonies and major crimes? It is the Christians. Everyone knows that adultery, crime, or murder by a Christian pastor is far more likely to be given space in the media than if committed by an atheist. Why? It is the rarity of the event, which makes it so newsworthy. As usual, it is not the dog biting the man which is published, but the man biting the dog. A genuine Christian does not do improper acts as often as the average person.

So the facts can, indeed, be quantified. They are there. It is the believers in and worshipers of the Creator God which consistently have contented, happier, more caring lives.

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Problems enter the lives of all, but it is the Creationists who are the most peaceful, the most obedient to right principles, and the most stalwart in their defense.

For a few minutes, let us gather together some data on how men face oncoming death. With an open mind, consider the facts for yourself. Except for unusual divine intervention, we will all die. That includes you; within a few years you will be dead. The way a man faces death is but a reflection of his entire way of life and all his past experiences. A man living for himself is terrorized by the approach of death, but a man who has personally experienced the presence of God realizes that death is not an enemy to be feared.

We are not here discussing something imaginary. The facts consistently bear out the fact that it is the leading atheists, the most blatant haters of God—who are the most terrorized as death approaches. In contrast, as we will see below, those who have loved and served the God of heaven have an amazingly peaceful certainty that the future will be far better than their present life.

Experience after experience can be collected and quantified. There is a God; He created the earth, sea, and sky. He also made us. We can only be happy as we love Him and obey His laws. In doing so, we become ennobled with better principles, live far happier lives, and are ready when death nears.

A group of American soldiers were gathered for the last time for entertainment in England. The next morning they were to ship out. One man stood to thank their British hosts, and then, as an afterthought, said to them: "Tomorrow morning we will cross the channel to France. There we will go to the trenches, and very possibly, of course, to death. -Can any of our friends here tell us how to die?" There was silence in the room.

Yet, although we rarely mention it to others, this is exactly what we want to know: how to face death.

When it comes, death frequently comes suddenly and unexpectedly. It is today that we must prepare for what will come as a certainty for tomorrow. The preparation can indeed be made. The following pages may be among the most important you will ever read.

On a dark afternoon in September 1583, in a stormy sea near the Azores, the Golden Hind, commanded by Sir Walter Raleigh, sailed close to the Squirrel, a smaller vessel commanded by Sir Humphrey Gilbert. The captain of the Golden Hind cried out to Gilbert, who was sitting in the stern of his vessel with a book open in his hand, and urged him, for his safety, to come aboard the larger vessel. This Gilbert refused to do, saying he would not leave his companions in the Squirrel. Then Raleigh heard him call out over the waves, "Heaven is as near by sea as by land." Conditions rapidly worsened; and, at midnight that night, those on the Golden Hind saw the lights on the smaller vessel suddenly go out. And, in that moment, Gilbert and his ship were swallowed up by the dark, raging sea.

Death can come suddenly for every one of us. But how many are ready when death draws near?

On her deathbed, Queen Victoria told those around her that she loved God and was His little child, so she was ready to die. Then she called for the hymn to be sung: "Rock of Ages, cleft for me. "Let me hide myself in Thee."

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For decades she had ruled the British Empire, but when death approached, all she had was God. And that is the consistent pattern with those who have made peace with their Creator and love and serve Him. Here is how Christians die, as revealed in their dying words:

Brownlow North (1875), a profligate nobleman who became a preacher: " 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin,' That is the verse on which I am now dying. One wants no more."

John Nelson Darby (1882): "Beyond the grave comes heaven. Well, it will be strange to find myself in Heaven, but it won't be a strange Christ —One I've known these many years. I am glad He knows me. I have a deep peace, which you know."

Charles Wesley, author of over 4,000 published hymns: "I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness. Satisfied!"

Charles Dickens (1870), the famous author: "I commit my soul to the mercy of God, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,"

John Quincy Adams: "This is the last of earth. I am content!"

Benjamin Parsons: "My head is resting very sweetly on three pillows: infinite power, infinite wisdom, and infinite love."

Henry Moorhouse (1880): "If it were God's will to raise me up (from this sickbed), I should like to preach from the text, John 3:16. Praise be to the Lord."

Earl Cairns (1885), lord high chancellor of England: "God loves me and cares for me. He has pardoned all my sins for Christ's sake, and I look forward to the future with no dread."

Bishop Joseph Lightfoot, after having several Scriptures read to him, and asked what he had in mind. In utter calmness of spirit, he replied: "I am feeding on a few great thoughts."

Sidney Cooper (1902), member of the Royal Academy of Science in London: "I have full faith in Thy atonement, and I am confident of Thy help. Thy precious blood I fully rely on. Thou art the source of my comfort. I have no other. I want no other,"

Lord V.C. Roberts (1914), who died in France while telling those gathered by him of the importance of their studying the Bible: "I ask you to put your trust in God. You will find in this Book guidance when you are in health, comfort when you are in sickness, and strength when you are in adversity,"

Catherine Booth, wife of the founder of the Salvation Army: "The waters are rising, but so am I, am not going under, but over. Do not be concerned about dying; go on living well, the dying will be right."

William Pitt (1778), Earl of Chatham, statesman, orator, and prime minister: "I throw myself on the mercy of God through the merits of Christ."

Edward Perronet, pastor and author: "Glory to God in the heights of His divinity! Glory to

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God in the depths of His humanity! Glory to God in His all-sufficiency! Into His hands I commend my spirit,"

Augustus Toplady (1778), preacher and author of the hymn, "Rock of Ages": "The consolations of God to such an unworthy wretch are so abundant that He leaves me nothing to pray for but a continuance of them. I enjoy heaven already in my soul,"

Sir Walter Raleigh, English admiral, before his beheading: "It matters little how the head lies if the heart be right. Why doest thou not strike?"

Countess of Huntingdon (1791): "I have the hope which inspired the dying malefactor. And now my work is done; I have nothing to do but go to the grave and thence to my Father,"

Robert Burns, the Scottish poet: "I have but a moment to speak to you, my dear. Be a good man; be virtuous; be religious. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to be here."

John Wesley (1791): "The best of all: God is with us!"

Lady Glenorchy: "If this is dying, it is the pleasantest thing imaginable."

John Bacon (1799), eminent English sculptor, whose monument of Lord Chatham stands in Westminster Abbey: "What I was as an artist seemed to be of some importance while I lived; but what I really was as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only thing of importance to me now. "

Francis Ridley Havergal, songwriter. After requesting a friend to read to her Isaiah 42, she uttered these nine words after verse 6-and died: ("I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee. "): "Called-held-kept! I can go home on that!"

George Washington (1799), an earnest Christian and the first president of the United States: "Doctor, I am dying, but I am not afraid to die."

John Huss, Bohemian reformer and martyr, asked at the last moment by the Duke of Bavaria to recant: "What I taught with my lips, I seal with my blood."

Lady Powerscourt (1800): "One needs a great many Scriptures to live by, but the only Scripture that a person needs to die by is 1 John 1 :7, and that verse never was sweeter to me than at this moment."

Sir Walter Scott (1832), the famous author was talking with his son-in-law: "What shall I read?" said Lockhart. "Can you ask?" The dying man replied, "there is only one Book."

John Pawson, minister: "I know I am dying, but my deathbed is a bed of roses. I have no thorns planted upon my dying pillow. In Christ, heaven is already begun!"

William Wilberforce (1833), member of Parliament who helped eliminate slavery in England: "My affections are so much in heaven that I can leave you all without a regret; yet I do

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not love you less, but God more."

Adoniram Judson: American missionary to Burma: "I go with the gladness of a boy bounding away from school. I feel so strong in Christ."

Captain Hedley Vicars (1855): "The Lord has kept me in perfect peace and made me glad with the light of His countenance. In the Lord Jesus I find all I want of happiness and enjoyment."

Sir Henry Havelock (1857), when felled by an attack of malignant cholera and told that he could not survive, calmly replied: "I have prepared for this for forty years," and then he added to those around him: "Prepare to meet thy God!"

The Apostle Paul (A.D. 66): "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Longfellow: "For the Christian, the grave itself is but a covered bridge leading from light to light, through a brief darkness."

Polycarp (A.D. 155), disciple of the Apostle John, at his own martyrdom: "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has done me nothing but good. How could I curse Him, My Lord and Saviour?"

David Brainard, pioneer missionary to the American Indians: "I do not go to heaven to be advanced, but to give honour to God. It is no matter where I shall be stationed in heaven, whether I have a high or low seat there, but to live and please and glorify God. . My heaven is to please God and glorify Him, and give all to Him and to be wholly devoted to His glory."

Susanna Wesley, mother of John and Charles Wesley: "Children, when I am gone, sing a song of praise to God."

George Whitefield, English evangelist: "Lord Jesus, I am weary in Thy work, but not of Thy work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for Thee once more in the fields, seal the truth, and come home to die."

Philip Melanchthon (1560), after several passages of Scripture were read to him by his son-in-law, he was asked if he would have anything else: "Nothing else but heaven!"

Preston: "Blessed by God! Though I change my place, I shall not change my company."

Samuel Rutherford(1615): "Mine eyes shall see my Redeemer. He has pardoned, loved, and washed me, and given me joy unspeakable and full of glory. I feed on manna. Glory, glory, glory to my Creator and Redeemer forever!"

Francis Bacon, lord chancellor of England: "The sweetest life in this world is piety, virtue, and honesty."

John Bunyan (1688), author of Pilgrim's Progress: "Weep not for me, but for yourselves. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, through the mediation of His blessed Son, receives

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me, though a sinner. We shall meet to sing the new song, and remain everlastingly happy."

Baxter, the English martyr: "I have pain; but I have peace, I have peace!"

David Brainard (1747), well-known missionary in the American Colonies: "I am going into eternity; and it is sweet to me to think of eternity; the endlessness of it makes it sweet. But oh! What shall I say of the future of the wicked! The thought is too dreadful!"

Ann Hasseltine Judson, missionary to Burma and wife of Adoniram Judson: "Oh, the happy day will soon come when we shall meet all our friends who are now scattered-meet to part no more in our heavenly Father's house."

Abbott: "Glory to God! After the grave heaven will open before me!"

John Knox: "Live in Christ, and the flesh need not fear death."

Everett: "Glory, glory, glory!" (This expression was repeated for 25 minutes and only ceased with life itself.)

John A. Lyth: "Can this be death? Why, it is better than living! Tell them I die happy in Jesus!"

Martin Luther: "Our God is the God from whom cometh salvation. God is the Lord by whom we escape death! Into Thy hands I commit my spirit; God of truth, Thou hast redeemed me!"

Margaret Prior: "Eternity rolls before me like a sea of glory!"

Goodwin: "Ah! is this dying? How have I dreaded as an enemy this smiling friend!"

Martha McCrackin: "How bright the room! How full of angels!"

Mary Frances: "Oh, that I could tell you what joy I possess! The Lord doth shine with such power upon my soul!"

Sir David Brewster, scientist and inventor of the kaleidoscope: "I will see Jesus; I shall see Him as He is! I have had the light for many years, Oh how bright it is! I feel so safe and satisfied!"

Michael Faraday (1867), chemist, electrical engineer, and leading British scientist, as he neared death, replied to a scientist who asked him what he would do in heaven: " 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him.' I shall be with Christ, and that is enough," When a journalist interjected and questioned him as to his speculations about a life after death, he said, "Speculations! I know nothing about speculations, I'm resting on certainties, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' and because He lives, I shall live also,"

Daniel Webster (1852), the well-known orator and legislator, had William Cowper's hymn read to him:

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"There is a fountain filled with blood,
"Drawn from Immanuel's veins."
Then he read the last stanza:
"Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
"I'll sing Thy power to save.
"When this poor lisping, stammering tongue
"Lies silent in the grave."

At this, Webster, one of the most powerful speakers in American history, replied, "Amen! Amen! Amen!"

Owen, the Puritan, lay on his deathbed, and his secretary was writing a letter, in his name, to a friend: "I am still in the land of the living," he wrote and read what he had written to Owen.

"No, please do not write that," Owen said. "I am yet in the land of the dying, but later I will be in the land of the living!"

On November 20, 1847, in Nice, France, Henry Frances Lyte, a retired pastor of the Church of England died. He had spent his life working in the slums of London helping people. After his death, his family found a paper he had written during those last days. It is now a hymn sung around the world:

"Abide with me: fast falls the eventide.
"The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!
"When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
"Help of the helpless, O abide with me."

Benjamin Franklin wrote the following epitaph for his own tomb, It is there today:

"The Body of Benjamin Franklin, Printer. Like the Cover of an Old Book, Its Contents Torn Out and Stripped of Its Lettering and Gilding, Lies Here, Food for Worms. Yet the Work Itself shall not be Lost; for It will, as He Believed, Appear once More in a New and More Beautiful Edition, Corrected and Amended by the Author."

The epitaph on the grave in Canterbury, England, of Henry Alford, the hymn writer is this: "The inn of a pilgrim journeying to Jerusalem."

A 22-year-old Dutch patriot wrote the following letter to his parents before he was executed by a Nazi firing squad for the crime of trying to escape with his three companions to England:

"In a little while at five o'clock it is going to happen, and that is not so terrible. On the contrary, it is beautiful to be in God's strength. God has told us that He will not forsake us if only we pray to Him for support. I feel so strongly my nearness to God, I am fully prepared to die. , I have confessed all my sins to Him and have become very quiet. Therefore do not mourn but trust in God and pray for strength. . Give me a firm handshake, God's will be done. . we are courageous. Be the same. They can only take our bodies. Our souls are in God's hands. . May God bless you all. Have no hate. I die without hatred. God rules everything. "

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Pilgrim's Progress is generally considered one of the greatest books ever written by a follower of Christ. In it, the two pilgrims, Christian and Hopeful, finally received their summons and came down to the river. But, when they saw how deep, wide, swift, and dark were its waters, they were stunned.

Then they were told, "You must go through, or you cannot come at the gate." Then they asked if the waters were all of a depth, and the answer was given: "You shall find it deeper or shallower as you believe in the King of the place,"

Then they went into the water, and Christian began to sink, and said: "I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head; all His waves go over me."

But Hopeful answered, "Be of good cheer, my brother: I feel the bottom, and it is good."

And with that Christian broke out with a loud voice, "Oh, I see him again; and he tells me, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

Then they both took courage, and the enemy was after that as still as a stone until they were gone over.

They had passed through the grave to the glorious resurrection day beyond.

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Little Kenneth was very sick. He felt that he was not going to get well. Turning toward his mother, who sat by his bedside, he asked, "Mother, what is it like to die?"

Mother was filled with grief, and she knew not how to answer him. She replied, "Kenneth, I must go to the kitchen. I'll be right back." Hurrying there, she prayed, "Lord, show me how to answer Kenneth's question." Immediately, she knew how to express it.

Returning to Kenneth, Mother said, "Kenneth, you know how you have often played hard and gotten very tired in the evening? Then you have come into my room and climbed upon my bed and gone to sleep. Later your father carried you in his arms and put you in your own bed. In the morning you have awakened and found yourself in your own room, without knowing how you got there."

Kenneth said, "Yes, Mother, I know that."

"Well, Kenneth," Mother continued, "death is something like that for God's children. Jesus spoke of death as sleep. God's children go to sleep with they die. Later, at the resurrection, they will arise and be with Christ forever. Heaven is a wonderful place, Kenneth!"

Then the boy smiled and said, "Mother, I won't be afraid to die now. I'll just go to sleep and, later, wake up and be with Jesus forever. I know God will take care of me."

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Henry Van Dyke wrote this very accurate statement: "Remember that what you possess in this world will be found at the day of your death and belong to someone else; what you are will be yours forever."

All that you own, will someday be given to another, but your character--what you are--will determine your future destiny.