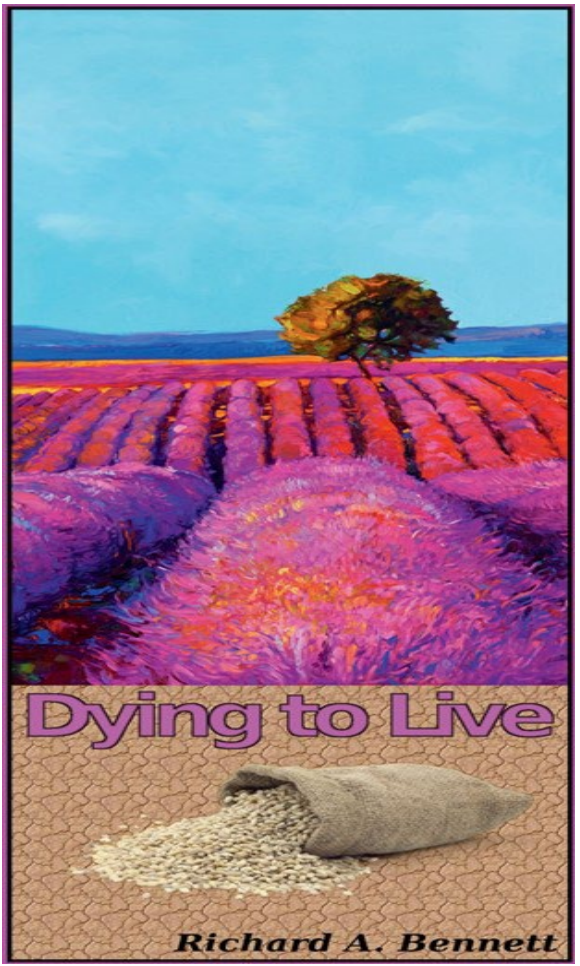

Dying to Live
Richard A. Bennett

Dying to Live!

"Our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" 2 Timothy 1:10. We rejoice with joy unspeakable that, *"Christ is Risen,"* and praise God that His resurrection life is the source of all our heavenly blessings!

In John's gospel chapter three, the word *"**must**"* is mentioned both in verse seven, and in verse fourteen. One *"**must**"* for the sinner and the other *"**must**"* for the Savior! When the Lord Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, a leading rabbi, He clearly said: *"Ye **must** be born again,"* followed by: *"The Son of Man **must** be lifted up."*

These two vital imperatives are foundational for our 'New life' in Christ: The first '**must'** of our new birth and, the second '**must**' of

His spotless atoning Blood—shed by our Lord Jesus when He was lifted up on the Cross! *"That we might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing ... Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins"* Colossians 1:10,13,14.

Such a radical experience is not merely by my making 'a decision for Christ.' Nor is it by my endeavor 'to serve the Lord.' But it is upon my being translated out of Satan's kingdom of darkness into the glorious Kingdom of Yeshua, the Lord Jesus, the risen God-Man!

The following testimony brought us immense joy, as a lady expressed her gratitude for the great deliverance wrought by the Lord! "Five years ago, Dorothy, the Lord deeply used your message in my life when you spoke on: *"**Christ in you, the hope of glory.**"* Now, as

a child of God, I can truly say that I understand how He chose you to be His vessel in helping me to come out of such horrible darkness into His marvelous light!" *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* Romans 8:1. Three life-changing phrases: *"Therefore;" "No condemnation," "In Christ Jesus!"*

Therefore: Whenever we read the word in the Bible, *"therefore,"* it has been suggested that we should ask: 'What is it there for?' After the Apostle Paul developed the theme of 'Salvation for mankind' in his introduction of chapter one, the life-transforming phrase in verse sixteen, clarified that: *"... **I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth**."* Paul then developed themes on: Our justification by faith; God's righteousness and His judgement and grace!

In chapter six, verse three; Paul continues: *"**Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?**"* Who then is this Baptizing Agent? 'When does this all take place?'

The 'Baptizing Agent' is none other than God the Holy Spirit! *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body"* 1 Corinthians 12:13. Praise God, we were also delivered: *"from the power of darkness and ... translated ... into the kingdom of His dear Son: In whom we have redemption through His blood."*

The subsequent consequence follows: *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* 2 Corinthians 5:17. Often so much time and energy is spent trying to mop up the puddles from aborted spiritual births. What is really missing is, that the spiritual enquirer needs to repent and turn from their blinding

bondage of sin and receive new life in the Lord Jesus as, He only is '**the Fountainhead of all Spiritual New life**!'

Joy, even in the most dismal days of despair? Yes! Joy and victory because of His 'Finished Work' at the cross of Calvary! The sacrificial, spotless Blood of Jesus was the only way to pay the price for my sin. The Lord Jesus died that I might live when He triumphantly rose from the dead. So now a repentant sinner, saved from Hell is living Heavenward as part of His redeemed family, by the Holy Spirit the Lord Jesus sent after His ascension!

'Dying to Live'

It is my privilege to be the Lord's ambassador in this evil world. Through His risen Life, I have been commissioned to be His witness and am now fully equipped for His plan to be outworked in and through my saved life!

Though the Apostle Paul taught us this truth; in Romans chapter seven, he humbly testified that his new life in Christ was daunted by two inner conflicts: (i) *"What I would, that I do not."* (ii) *"What I hate that I do"* verse15.

Such ongoing battles between the residual aspects of his old 'flesh' life, and that of the indwelling 'resurrection' life of the Holy Spirit, caused Paul to cry:

"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:24. Surely, this may sound like some strange language in today's humanistic society which seems to delight in exalting self-love and self-pleasing!

Many years ago, Dorothy and I arrived at a Pastor's home on the Canadian Prairies. Upon greeting us warmly, he apologetically said: "Please do excuse me. Make yourselves

at home. I was just leaving to view the body of a newly deceased congregational member, and the family are expecting me to be there."

Later, when the Pastor returned home, he had a smile on his face. "I can't help laughing," he said, "I was about to view the corpse laid in the coffin, when a lady ahead of me, gazing at the dead body—which the cosmetician had beautified to give a life-like appearance—turned and said, 'My! Doesn't she look well?' I gathered she was referring to the dressed-up, dead body with the perfect 'appearance' of robust life!"

Sadly, many lack any comprehension of a personal, vital communion with the living God. They will gladly volunteer the 'flesh,' and become absorbed in the busyness of Christian activity which results in: *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding*

brass or a tinkling cymbal" 1 Corinthians 13:1. With spiritual unreality and void of any 'heartbreaking concern' to share Christ with others; do my words also ring like, *"Sounding brass and tinkling cymbal"?*

Am I willing to: *"... reckon myself dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord"* Romans 6:11.

Am I willing to be available to His indwelling, that His heavenly Love so flow through my life that others meet Him also?

"**No Condemnation**."

Charles Wesley was so inspired with these two meaningful words, that he wrote:

'No condemnation now I dread,
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine.
Bold, I approach the eternal Throne, and
Claim the crown through '**Christ, my own**.'

Before Charles Wesley's brother, John, spiritually entered such glorious assurance; he painfully discovered the total impotence of his 'flesh' in trying to serve the Lord Jesus!

As a minister and missionary, John Wesley gladly linked-up with a Moravian mission. He left England to go to an Indian reservation in Georgia, USA, but later confessed:

"I went to convert the Indians, but soon discovered that which I least of all expected: I who went to convert others was not yet converted to God."

Returning to England as a despondent man; John Wesley attended a prayer meeting at Aldersgate Mission in London. It was there that he later testified of a 'heartwarming experience,' in which the Holy Spirit bore witness with his spirit that he was now a child of God!

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" Romans 8:1-2.

Such is the glorious heritage of every born-again believer! When, by God's grace we walk in His resurrection power; victory will be apparent out of the grave of my defeat: *"For, if we have been planted together out of the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection"* Romans 6:5.

"In Christ."

Seventy-seven times in the New Testament, the truth of a believer being *"In Christ,"* is mentioned. And this is not an insignificant number! *"Wherefore, 'if'* (**since**) *you be dead with Christ ... If* (**since**) *you then be risen with Christ"* Colossians 2:20; 3:1. These truths

are further developed in verse three: *"**You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God**."*

It has been said that the word 'pregnant' is a derivative from the word 'hid.' An expectant mother carries her unborn baby in a perfect environment in her womb; thus, providing it with both nourishment and protection.

This little life is a classic illustration of how the believer's life is, *"**hidden with Christ in God**;"* awaiting that glorious day, *"**when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory**"* Colossians 3:4.

The liberating truth of my being, *"**in Christ**,"* is emphasized three times in Romans six:

Baptized into His death: verse 3.

Buried with Him by baptism into death: vs. 4.

Union: *"If we have been **planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection**"* verse 5.

Yes! It is astonishing that I not only died in Christ, but that I also was raised together with Him to sit in heavenly places! *"God who is rich in mercy ... has quickened us together with Christ (by grace you are saved;) and hath **raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus**"* Ephesians 2:4-6.

"Heavenly Perspective"

I well remember a dark, dismal rainy morning, when a friend picked me up in an old yellow Volkswagen to take me to our local satellite airport. As the gusts of wind blew across the car, and the windshield wipers went 'clickety-click.' I thought, "**What a nasty day!**"

Arriving at the airport, I dashed over the wet tarmac; took my place in a ten-seater plane, crouched seated in my wet clothes! The pilot welcomed us passengers by saying, “This is a British built plane; but I have to warn you, though fuel efficient, it is very noisy.” He was right! Again, I thought: “**What a nasty day**!”

Soon we roared on the runway to penetrate a low cloud ceiling just as the morning sun peeped over the eastern horizon. I gazed below to view a carpet of billowy clouds bathed in silver and golden rays. From this different perspective, I now mused upon: “**What a wonderful day to be alive**!”

With the knowledge that through death; burial; and resurrection, our life is now ‘hidden’ with Christ in God. Yes! We have been radically severed from the old earthbound existence of ‘self-centeredness!’ Now, from our Lord’s ‘resurrection side of

the Cross;' we can rejoice in our new perspective of abundant life in Him! But, if we are to enjoy a constant fellowship with Him in His resurrection Life, we need to know of God's provision for me to deal with my 'self-life,' which so often is the believer's problem!

Therefore, to better understand the believer's biblical position of co-crucifixion with Christ, can be a life-transforming experience for my time here on earth. Instead of living my 'self-centered existence,' it will now become, 'Christ-centered' to His glory!

One evening in a prayer meeting, I heard a lady praying with unusual sincerity as she was obviously meeting God in a new and life-transforming way: "Lord Jesus, throw Your arms of love around me; fold me to the Cross, and 'love me to death.' **Dwelling in the heavenlies with Christ; I pray that it might**

be no longer 'I,' but that You live through my totally available life for Your glory!"

The sincerity of her prayer impressed me. This lady knew that her body was still very much in this world and wanted His resurrection Life to be witnessed through her! As she prayed, she sought God's solution to her self-seeking deeds and words that she had expressed in her earthy life down here. Such a meaningful prayer surely expressed her fervent desire for a more intimate, daily, living fellowship with her Lord!

Upon further reflection of her prayer, I realized that Paul had given the biblical basis for such a transparent, heart-agonizing petition when he wrote: *"**For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live**"* Romans 8:13.

"The Deeds of the Body"

Understanding a fuller meaning of this liberating truth, the original Greek reads: *"if you live after the flesh, you shall die;* ***but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live"*** Romans 8:13.

First: The word '*you*;' written in the active voice, is the subject of, '*put to death*'!

Biblical fact: I must actively and positively cooperate with God if I am to be delivered from the 'deeds' of my body and my self-centered living.

Second: This verse tells us that it is ***"through the Spirit,"*** that 'God's Divine Executioner,' makes His own wonderful provision for victory over our self-bound living!

Biblical fact: Though I must be prayerfully and actively involved in this process, of myself, I cannot bring to death my self-bound

actions! **Only the Holy Spirit can radically sever me from self-centered living**!

Third: This verse is written in the present tense, to show in practical terms, the use of what this tense indicates that my prayerful and **active cooperation with God must be continually exercised**!

Biblical fact: Though it can be a transforming experience the first time a Christian asks the Holy Spirit to love their 'self-life' to death; it is not something that is only done once. No! Whenever the self-life rears its 'ugly head' there must be confession and specific prayer on my part, **cooperating with the liberating work of the indwelling Holy Spirit and seek His fresh infilling.** God intends that this attitude of faith be a continual, ongoing, ever-present experience!

To further illustrate this truth:

Let us imagine a scene in a Courtroom: A

man is being tried for murder. The evidence has been sifted; the man's guilt has been established. Now the judge pronounces the sentence: "This man has been found guilty of murder and is therefore condemned to die!"

With that somber statement, the task of the judge is finished! However if the judge, at his sentence of death upon the criminal, were to take a pistol from under his bench and shoot the murderer, then he himself would become guilty of murder!

Instead, after announcing the sentence of death, all that the judge can do, is to hand the condemned man over to the authorized State Executioner. In the same way, our self-life can do nothing but to recognize and confess the specific sin. Like the judge in the Courtroom, we must pronounce the judgment of death upon all our sinful actions.

But, just as the judge could never take the life of the murderer, so we too in our self-centered condition, do not have the power to put to death the sins of our self-life! But thanks be to God, He has provided the Divine Executioner—the Holy Spirit. It is by the Holy Spirit that He has the power to render inoperative the potential sins of my self-life.

Yes, by God's grace, it is '**through the Spirit**' that we are enabled to bring to death the deeds of the body. And, as we daily avail ourselves of His wonderful provision on a continuing basis, we can anticipate an experience of His liberating joy that is truly Christ-centered for His glory alone!

It is easy to imagine that the ultimate purpose for our being nourished and nurtured with the Word of God, is that we may graduate to a life of personal contentment. Not so! Why did the Old Testament priest nurture and nourish the

very best of his flock? Merely to have the finest specimens put on display? On the contrary! These were the very sheep that were needed for the slaughter! **They were purposed from their birth to be a sacrifice**!

Too often Christians wrongly conclude that their musical, or oratorical abilities, will somehow please Christ and that they will become the gold medalist before a crowd of evangelical spectators!

When God nourishes us in His Word, His purpose is not that we may make a better 'platform appearance,' but that every area of our life be laid on His altar of sacrifice.

Before we can be alive to all that we have in Him—and witness the overflow in my life of His resurrection blessings, a 'spiritual death' is essential!

Self-sufficiency; self-centeredness; self-pity; self-pleasing; and self-vindication, must be reckoned dead: *"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Romans 6:11.

In the Bible, 'death' never means extinction but 'separation.' For instance, physical death is the separation of the soul from the body and, eternal death is the eternal separation of the soul from God! Similarly, **death to the self-life** is the continual separation of selfish deeds from human behavior patterns. This, as we have already discussed, **can only be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit of God**!

"Practical Outcome"

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"

1 John 3:16. With a pained heart; the Apostle Paul wrote that, apart from Timothy, he could find no other person who would exercise 'care' in the church at Colossae. With pathos, he wrote: *"**For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus**"* Philippians 2:21. Yes, many Christians in Colossae did not experience the, *"love seeketh not its own"* 1 Corinthians 13:5.

Are we so preoccupied with our life as it affects 'us,' that there is no time to love people except those in our inner circle of family and friends? Where are the Christians who really care about the suffering Church in other parts of the world? Scriptures say: *"**love suffers long and seeks not his own**"* 1 Corinthians 13: 4-5 and Hebrews 13: 2. *"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound; and them which suffer adversity as being yourselves also in the body."*

When on the Cross, the Lord Jesus endured inconceivable suffering, He personified the Love of God in that He endured that suffering for you and for me!

To really love somebody means that we are prepared to suffer with them and for them.

Before a bushel of wheat can produce an abundant harvest, it must be planted in the soil—there to die.

Only thus will my self-seeking become a life of my selfless serving for: *"**The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us**"* Romans 5:5.

Just as a cup full of vinegar must first be emptied of its bitterness before it can be the receptacle of sweet, luscious orange juice, so our self-life must first be brought to death before we can be filled with the Love of God!

It is needful for every believer to humbly confess specific independent actions of the self-will, and to promptly ask the Lord to bring the self-life to death in order to ask for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.

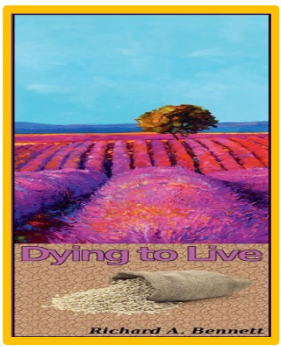
The prerequisite of a spiritually fruitful life is the initial understanding, and the continual application of death to self-centered living. By the grace of God, He has made provision for both of these! The Lord Jesus revealed His purpose for having left Heaven to cloth Himself as the perfect God-Man in our midst.

"And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them ... I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou has sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me" John 17:22-23. May my life be a witness of my '**Dying to Live'** for the glory of my risen Lord Jesus—He who is my Life!

For further spiritual help:

“Food for Faith”

by Richard A. Bennett.



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