

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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FROM DEATH
BY BEING
IN
THE SPIRIT

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Living Stream Ministry

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Several verses in [chapters five through eight of Romans](#) cover the matter of death. [Romans 5:12](#) says, “Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin; and so death passed to all men because all have sinned.” For sin to enter into the world means that it has entered into humanity. Through one man, Adam, sin entered into mankind. Furthermore, through sin death entered. Sin came first and death followed. Wherever there is sin, there is death.

[Romans 5:17](#) says, “By the offense of the one death reigned through the one.” Death has not only entered the world; it reigns. Even today death reigns like a king.

DEATH, THE WAGES OF SIN

[Romans 6:23](#) says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Wages are something we receive in payment for work we have done. If you do the work of sin, you will receive the wages of

death. This means that death is the pay received for your work of sin. For example, you may lose your temper. This is a work of sin, and the payment for doing this work is death. When people work overtime, they receive higher wages. Likewise, if you sin a little, you receive little pay, but if you sin a great deal, you will receive extra pay.

KILLING THROUGH THE LAW

In [7:11](#) Paul says, “For sin, taking occasion through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me.” According to this verse, sin does two things: it deceives us and it kills us. To kill something is to put it to death. Thus, to say that sin kills us means that sin puts us to death. This happens through the law, for sin takes occasion through the commandment. In a sense, sin takes advantage of the law to kill us.

Before you were saved or before you were stirred up in spirit to seek the Lord, you might have lost your temper frequently without being aware of any killing. The reason for this is that you had not made up your mind not to lose your temper any more. But after you were saved or were stirred up to seek the Lord, you prayed, “O Lord, I know that as one who is seeking You, I should not lose my temper. This damages my

testimony for You among my family and friends. Therefore, I am making up my mind that from now on I will never lose my temper again.” In praying this way you make a strict law for yourself regarding losing your temper. This new law is your eleventh commandment. Moses gave ten commandments, but you make another commandment, the commandment about not losing your temper. However, when you lose your temper after making such a law, your temper kills you. It takes advantage of your self-made law to put you to death. If you lose your temper in the morning, you may be killed for the whole day. But when you lost your temper in the past, you did not sense the killing, because you had not made a law about losing your temper. The more laws we make, the more we shall be killed. Remember, sin always takes advantage of the commandment to put us to death.

THE BODY OF THIS DEATH

In [Romans 7:24](#) Paul declares, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?” In this verse Paul speaks of “this death,” which is the very death defined in [Romans 7](#). It is important to know what is the death revealed and explained in this chapter.

Whenever we make up our mind to keep the law, something in our flesh rises up, fights against the law of good in our mind, defeats us, captures us, and kills us. If we do not make up our mind to keep the commandments, this element in our flesh remains dormant. But whenever we make up our mind to do good in order to please God, this element in the flesh rises up, defeats us, captures us, and slays us. This causes us to suffer what Paul calls “this death.”

In [Romans 7](#) the problem is not hell or the Devil; it is “the body of this death.” We have a body which has in it an awful thing called “this death.” In order to exist, we need a body. Yet our body is no longer a pure body, but a terrible body, a body of this death. Whenever we decide to do good in order to please God, something in this body rises up to kill us.

THE LAW OF SIN AND OF DEATH

From [7:24](#) we go on to the matter of the law of sin and of death in [8:2](#). Although it is difficult to find terminology to express what this law is, it is easy to understand it according to experience. For example, it is easy to apply electricity in using household appliances, but it is difficult to define electricity. Instead of attempting to define the law

of sin and death, we shall talk about it from the standpoint of experience.

None of us likes to lose our temper. We realize that it is very unbecoming to do so. But suppose you are stirred up to love the Lord and you make up your mind not to lose your temper again. One morning you pray about this and decide never again to lose your temper. Immediately afterward, your wife gives you a difficult time and makes you angry. Although you try to suppress your anger, eventually you lose your temper. It seems that the more you try to hold in your temper, the stronger it is when it is released. You had no intention or desire to lose your temper, but you lost it anyway. This comes from the working of the law of sin within you. Suppressing your temper is like pressing down a rubber ball: the more you press it down, the higher it rises. This is a law. When sin works by the law, death follows immediately. As soon as you lose your temper, death comes in to kill you. Thus, by losing your temper you are killed by the law of death. Because the law of death has killed you, you cannot pray, fellowship, or testify. If you should try to do any of these things, you feel that you are hollow and empty and that your words

are lifeless. This is the result of the working of the law of sin and of death.

Sin and death are two items, but they have just one law. The law of sin is the law of death, and the law of death is the law of sin. This is the reason that [8:2](#) speaks of the law of sin and of death. Sin works to bring in death, and death works to follow sin. These two always go together. Every sin, even a little weakness, brings in death.

SETTING THE MIND ON THE FLESH

[Romans 8:6](#) says, “The mind set on the flesh is death.” To set the mind on the flesh means to exercise the mind to consider the things of the flesh. For example, to set your mind on worldly fashions or advertisements in the newspaper is to set it on things of the flesh. Likewise, to consider the weaknesses of your wife or husband is to set the mind on the flesh. The result of this is death.

The death caused by setting the mind on the flesh is not, of course, the kind of death that causes you to die physically and be buried in the grave. No, this death has other symptoms, such as darkness and uneasiness. When you feel uneasiness and unrest within, that is a sign of death.

Dissatisfaction is another symptom. Perhaps in your time with the Lord in the morning you are very satisfied with the Lord, but after breakfast you set your mind on the advertisements in the newspaper. The more you consider them, the more dissatisfaction you are conscious of within. This dissatisfaction is a sign of death. Weakness is another sign. As we all know, the ultimate point of weakness is death. When someone is weak to the extent that he can no longer breathe, he dies. That is the consummation of weakness. Hence, weakness is an expression of death. Another sign of death is dryness. When you feel dry within, with no sense of being watered, you are in death. All these items—darkness, uneasiness, dissatisfaction, weakness, and dryness—are signs of inward spiritual death. Whenever you set your mind upon fleshly things, you will be conscious of one or more of these signs of death. To be filled with such things is to be filled with death.

Whenever you are suffering from inward death, those in the spirit will be able to sense it. They will realize immediately that you are filled with death. Your prayers indicate this. You may pray, but there will be no life in your prayers; instead, there will be death. Instead of watering, there will be dryness.

THE SPIRIT MAKING HOME IN US

[Romans 8:9](#) says, “But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.” The Greek word rendered “dwells” is not the usual word for “abide.” The Greek word here has the same root as the word for house. It conveys the thought, not of staying in a place for a certain time, but of making your home in a place, of settling down there. If the Spirit is making home in you, you are no longer in the flesh, but in the spirit.

OUR BODY BEING DEAD, BUT OUR SPIRIT BEING LIFE

In [Romans 8:10](#) Paul says, “And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness.” Because Christ, who is life, is in our spirit, our spirit is life. However, because Christ is confined in our spirit, our body remains dead. The sphere of life is limited to our spirit. Life has not yet spread into our body; therefore, the body remains dead. According to [Ephesians 2](#) and [John 5](#), a fallen person is dead. [Ephesians 2:5](#) indicates that before we were saved, we were not only sinful, but also dead. [John 5:25](#) says, “Truly, truly, I say to you,

an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live.” This verse does not refer to those who are physically dead and buried; it refers to the living dead, to those dead in spirit. If you read [John 5](#), you will see that [verse 28](#) refers to those who are physically dead and buried in the tomb. But in [verse 25](#) the Lord is speaking of people who are spiritually dead, yet physically alive. All the unsaved people are dead. Because their body has been poisoned by the serpent, their body has been deadened. This deadened body has also deadened their soul and spirit. Therefore, the unsaved people are dead in body, soul, and spirit. Every part of their being is dead.

As I was traveling through the interior of China in 1937, I stopped by a creek which was full of dried leaves that were carried along by the current. Among the leaves some little fish were swimming upward against the current. Unlike the dried leaves that were being carried aimlessly downstream, the fish, full of life, were swimming upstream with a definite purpose. When I saw that, I was so impressed that I even shouted, “Here is life and death.” All the unsaved people are like the dried leaves: they are being carried aimlessly along by the current of the age. Like those leaves,

they are confused and without order. But we, the believers in Christ, are like the fish swimming against the current of the age with a definite purpose. Moreover, we are not in confusion, but in a good order. The more life we have, the more we are in order and regulated. But the more death we have, the more confused we become. The reason today's society is such a confusion is that it is filled with dead people, with those who are dead in body, soul, and spirit. We need to sound out the gospel and give them an opportunity to hear the voice of the Lord.

When we heard the gospel and called on the name of the Lord Jesus, immediately the Holy Spirit came into our spirit and enlivened it. In this way our deadened spirit was made alive. Now that Christ is in our spirit, our spirit is life.

But what about our body and mind? Both our body and mind may still be in death. Many have a mind of death because they do not allow the indwelling Christ in their spirit to spread into their mind. When I read a newspaper, I am very careful to read only the news about international affairs. If I read other news items, I set my mind upon the flesh, and my mind is death immediately. We need to allow the indwelling Christ to spread from our spirit into our mind. If

we allow Him to spread in this way, eventually life will be imparted even into our mortal body. Then the spirit and the mind will be life, and the body also will be enlivened. [Romans 8:11](#) indicates this: “But if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from among the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from among the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who indwells you.”

THE FLESH OF SIN

By entering into our body, sin has caused it to become the fallen flesh. Therefore, in [6:6](#) the body is called “the body of sin.” It is also called “the flesh of sin” ([8:3](#)) because it has been corrupted by sin. Both the body of sin and the flesh of sin refer to the same thing. In the corrupted body, the flesh of sin, are so many lusts. In [7:17](#) Paul says, “So now it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.” To be specific, sin dwells in our flesh, thereby causing it to become the flesh of sin.

THE EFFECTS OF DEATH

This indwelling sin is the cause of death. Wherever sin is, there death is also. The death described in [Romans 5 through 8](#) is not mainly

the death that causes people to die physically, but the death that kills them today. This death is doing a deadening work upon us. The reason so many are weak in prayer and low in functioning in the meetings is the working of death. Some brothers and sisters are not one. This lack of oneness comes from death. If you cannot open your mouth to testify in a living way, it is because of the deadening, the working, of death. If you were not under death, you would be bubbling, praying, praising, functioning, and testifying all the time. Furthermore, you would be one with all the saints. As long as you are not like this, you are dead, even though you may be good, right, and scriptural.

Romans 8:6 says that the mind set on the flesh is death. The kind of death here is not that which causes people to die physically and to be buried; it is the death that deadens them all day long. In doing many things, you may be full of energy, but in praying you are low and lifeless. This means that the death in your body has spread its influence and deadening power into your mind and spirit.

Many Christians find it difficult to remember verses in the Bible, but they can easily remember so many details about their possessions. This

indicates that their minds have been deadened. When the mind has been deadened, it is good for fleshly and worldly things but not for spiritual things.

We need to allow the indwelling Christ to spread from our spirit to all the inward parts of our being. We should pray, “Lord Jesus, I will let You spread in me. I want You to have a free course within me.” If you do this, your mind will become sober and your memory keen. Spontaneously it will be easy for you to remember verses in the Bible.

Death is working in an inward direction from our body to our spirit, but life works in an outward direction from our spirit to our body. The direction of death’s work is from the circumference to the center, whereas the direction of life’s work is from the center to the circumference. Therefore, death and life work in opposite directions. As death works from the circumference to the center, it deadens our mind and spirit.

THE WAY TO BE FREED FROM DEATH

We must find out how to be freed from death. Death’s base in us is the flesh. The only way to escape from death and to be freed from it is to

take refuge in our spirit. Our flesh is the base of death, and our spirit is our refuge. We need to flee into this refuge and escape from death. Death is versus life, and life is versus death. Death is in our flesh, and life is in our spirit. Nothing can chase death away or swallow it up, just as nothing can drive darkness away. However, when light comes, darkness vanishes. There is no need to expend effort to drive darkness away or to command it to disappear. Simply allow the light to come in. The more the light comes in, the more the darkness disappears. The same principle applies to the matter of life versus death. By our effort we cannot drive death away or swallow it up. Only life can swallow death, and life is in our spirit. Whenever life comes in, death vanishes.

Death is Satan and life is Christ. Do not let yourself be associated with Satan in the flesh, but always stay in your spirit with Christ as life. Then you will see that Christ, who is your life, will have a free course within you to spread into every part of your being. Eventually, He will saturate every part of you. This is the enlivening, the quickening, of life. Life will enliven your mind, emotion, and will and even be imparted into your mortal body. Thus, every part of your being will be life. The spirit is life, the mind will be life,

and the body also will be life. When this happens, death, the last enemy, will be swallowed up.

THE LAST ENEMY

Death is not only God's last enemy; it is our last enemy too. The last enemy is not sin, the law, or the flesh; it is death. In the eyes of God nothing is as abominable as death. Not even sin is as abominable as death. God hates death even more than sin. Sin is against what God does, but death insults what God is. Sin opposes God's righteousness, but death insults God's very being. Suppose a little boy plays in the mud and becomes very dirty. No matter how dirty he may be, we still will love him and be willing to play with him. However, suppose the little boy dies and is laid out in a coffin. Although he may be fully clean, we will not want to be with him. Instead, we will flee, not because he is dirty, but because he is dead.

I am troubled by the fact that so many Christians fear uncleanness, but are not concerned about deadness. But, to repeat, God hates death more than sin. In typology, if a person was contaminated by an unclean thing, he could be cleansed rather easily and in a short period of time. But if he touched any dead thing, it took

him a longer period of time, at least seven days, to be made clean. This indicates that in the eyes of God death is more serious than sin.

CARING FOR LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

It is better to make a mistake in functioning in the meetings than to be dead and not make any mistakes at all. To be wrong is not as serious as to be dead. If you do not function, you may be right, but you are right in a dead way. I would rather see you livingly wrong than dead right. I do not encourage you to make mistakes. But sometimes it is better to be more concerned about being living than about your being right. We need to recognize the symptoms of deadness to know whether we are dead or alive.

In the Gospel of John the Lord Jesus does not give yes-or-no answers to the questions addressed to Him. For example, the Samaritan woman said, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men must worship” ([John 4:20](#)). She was asking the Lord Jesus concerning the proper place of worship. Was it in the mountain in Samaria or in Jerusalem? The Lord Jesus answered, “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the

Father in spirit and reality; for the Father seeks such to worship Him” ([John 4:23](#)). The Lord Jesus seemed to be saying, “Worshipping God is a matter of life, and life is in the spirit. It is not a question of worshipping God on this mountain or in Jerusalem. The hour has come to worship God in the spirit.”

We find another example in [John 9](#). Seeing a man blind from birth, the Lord’s disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?” ([John 9:2](#)). The Lord replied, “Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God might be manifested in him” ([v. 3](#)). In John, the book of life, there are no yes-or-no answers; instead, there is life.

In [John 7](#) the Lord’s brothers in the flesh suggested that He go up to Jerusalem ([vv. 3-4](#)). The Lord said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready... You go up to the feast; I am not going up to this feast, because My time has not yet fully come” ([vv. 6, 8](#)). However, [verse 10](#) says, “But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He also went up, not publicly, but as in secret.” Here we see that the Lord answered and acted according to life.

We are all familiar with the record of Lazarus

in [John 11](#). When Lazarus' sisters sent the Lord the news that Lazarus was ill and asked Him to come, He refused. Having heard that Lazarus was sick, "He remained then two days in the place where He was" ([v. 6](#)). When the disciples expected the Lord Jesus to go to Lazarus, He did not go. But when they had made up their minds not to go, the Lord said, "Let us go into Judea again" ([v. 7](#)). In all these cases we see that what the Lord Jesus did was always a matter of life.

In [Genesis 2](#) there are two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Good and evil are also a matter of yes or no. Yes and no, right and wrong, good and evil, these come from the source of the tree of knowledge. We need to forget about the concept of yes or no and stay in our spirit. This is the way to be freed from death. The way to be freed from death is not a matter of doing certain things; it is to stay in the spirit. If we stay in the spirit, we shall walk and behave according to the spirit. We shall have our whole being according to the spirit, and we shall think, express ourselves, and do everything in the spirit. Then there will be no death. This is the way to be freed from death and to overcome the last enemy.

Any death that still remains in our being is an

abomination in the eyes of God, and we must eliminate it. We must escape from the base of death in the flesh into our spirit, where Christ, our life, is. We need to stay in the spirit and behave according to the spirit. If we do this, we shall be free from death.

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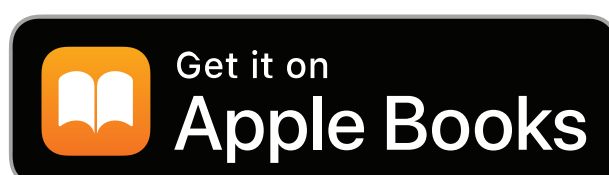
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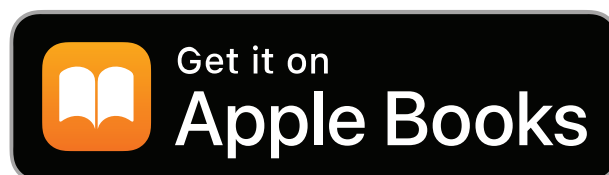
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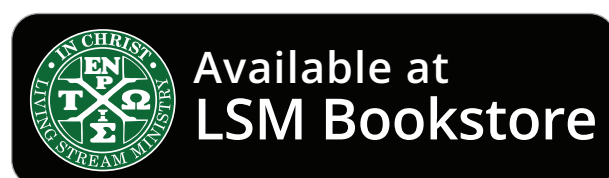
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