INTRODUCTION: We always want goodness and life. However, if this is all we get, we miss out on the miraculous blessings of death.

Death: the Gate of Life – Sir Noel Paton painted *Death the Gate of Life*. In it, a “weary knight, wounded in his conflict with evil, has passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and kneels in deep humility at the entrance of the world of light, and life. He has put off his helmet with the crest of falcon wings and peacock’s feathers—emblems of worldly ambition and pride. The belt and sword which are cast aside, and the armor which is falling off, indicate the renunciation of his own strength. The overblown hemlock, rank weeds, and withered branches on this side of the veil speak of sin’s deadly poison and of disappointed hopes, while the white lilies and wild roses on the other side tell of the purity and joy which blossom there.” Though this may be a picture of physical death for the believer, it portrays much more than that. In the teaching of scripture, death is often the gate into life. –from *Beyond Humiliation* by John Gregory Mantle (p.99)

I. The Death of the Seed unto Germination (v.23-24)

1Corinthians 15:35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?
36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:
37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:
38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

My Heart, My Aching Heart! – Robert Robinson (1735-1790), the English Baptist pastor and author, is best known as the author of the hymn, *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*. In 1787, his life was “interrupted by the death of his favorite daughter, Julia, at the age of seventeen. A tall, beautiful and intelligent girl, Julia was the apple of her father’s eye and he had been smitten to the heart when two years earlier she had going into a decline. All his hopes and fears concerning her health ended on Tuesday evening, 9th October when, after kissing her sisters, Nancy and Patty, she leaned back on her pillow, murmured, ‘Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit’, and fell quietly into her last sleep… For a while Robinson’s grief was inconsolable. ‘My heart, my aching heart!’ he cried. ‘Here am I—here, As on a lonely building’s top, The sparrow tells her moan, Far from the tents of joy and hope, I sit and grieve alone.’

“He was to an extent consoled and cheered two months afterward by baptizing six of his children in the baptistery which he had previously constructed in his own garden and receiving them into church membership.” See Proverbs15:13 – “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.”

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II. The Death of the Saviour unto Resurrection (v.23, 32-33; Revelation 1:18)

John 10:17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.
18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

III. The Death of Sinner unto Salvation (v.25)

Mark 8:35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.
36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Faith in Despair – “Faith is often born in despair. To become exceeding sinful in our own eyes may bring us to Paul’s heart-rending cry: ‘O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ (Romans 7:24.)

“What is the matter? Wherein is our trouble? We have proceeded on the wrong basis. We have missed God’s way of victory over sin. James H. McConkey well says: ‘God lays His foundations deep. Victory over sin He lays in the deeps of death. The Holy Spirit begins His triumphant teaching of the believer’s victory over sin by one terse, striking, graphic phrase, “dead to sin.”’ Notice in Romans 6 the Spirit’s emphasis on this death to sin: ‘dead to sin’ (v.2); ‘died unto sin’ (v.10); ‘dead indeed unto sin’ (v.11).” –from Born Crucified by L. E. Maxwell (p.21-22).

Philippians 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:
10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;
11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

God’s Ways – “God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts; nor His ways as our ways; nor His love as our love. If we hear of a friend in distress or difficulty of any kind, our first impulse is to fly to his help and relieve him of his trial, if possible. But this might be a great mistake. In place of rendering help, it might be doing serious mischief. We might actually be running athwart the purpose of God, and taking our friend out of a position in which divine government had placed him for his ultimate and permanent profit.” –from Miscellaneous Writings by C. H. Mackintosh

IV. The Death of the Self unto Sanctification (v.26; Romans 8:13; Galatians 2:20)

Romans 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.
13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.
14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.
15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.
16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Killed in Action; But Alive! – “During the Civil War a man by the name of George Wyatt was drawn by lot to go to the front. He had a wife and six children. A young man named Richard Pratt offered to go in his stead. He was accepted and joined the ranks, bearing the name and number of George Wyatt. Before long Pratt was killed in action. The authorities later sought again to draft George Wyatt into service. He protested, entering the plea that he had died in the person of Pratt. He insisted that the authorities consult their own records as to the fact of his having died in identification with Pratt, his substitute. Wyatt was thereby exempted as beyond the claims of law and further service. _He had died in the person of his representative._ There we have the truth of identification in a nutshell. God’s way of deliverance is through death—through identification with our Substitute in His death and resurrection.” –from Born Crucified by L. E. Maxwell (p.13).

2Corinthians 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

Colossians 3:3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

2Timothy 2:11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:

When I Am Weak – _Diary Entry for July 29, 1780:_ “Am I not a fool and slow of heart to believe? Notwithstanding all the Scripture says of my impotency, all the experience I have had of it, and all my settled and avowed principles, how hard is it for me to believe that I am _nothing!_ Ah! Can I live near to God, set or keep the springs of godliness a-going in my soul, or investigate the things of God to any purpose? No, I cannot: ‘When I am weak, then (and then only) am I strong!’” _Fuller_

V. The Death of the Saints unto Glorification (v.17-19)

Psalm 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

1Corinthians 15:36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:
37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:
38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.
1 Corinthians 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.
55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.
57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

They Paid the Ultimate Price – Missionaries routinely suffer for their work in taking the gospel to foreign lands. But today, we have come to look on outstanding suffering as unusual or unnecessary. In earlier generations, it was much more common. Many died from lack of basic protections from disease. One report in *Up From Zero in North China* by Anna Seward Pruitt states (p.17): "Even by 1890 there was not, in all the North China field, among with Baptists or Presbyterians, a mother who had lived to bring up her own children." Truly, they paid the ultimate price.

**CONCLUSION:** Have you died? Would you be willing to die to sin? To self?

In the Middle of the Field – E. M. Bounds (1835-1913) was a prayer-warrior known for his books on prayer. About 1902, he received an invitation to speak at the first Atlanta Baptist Tabernacle Conference. He went to the meeting with his son Osborne. “Bags in hand, they boarded a train headed west. As the conductor approached the pair, he inquired of their destination. Bounds said, ‘My son and I are going to Atlanta.’ With that he withdrew from his pocket a handful of change and said, ‘I know this is not enough to get us all the way to our destination, but you can put us off at the point where this fare runs out.’

"The conductor quickly counted the coins and said, ‘Brother Bounds, this is not nearly enough to get you and the boy there. I would have to put you off in the middle of a field somewhere.’ Bounds replied, ‘Well, if we are put out in the middle of a field, it will be precisely where God wants us to be.’

"As a young man, Osborne was impressed by his father’s trust and faith in God. When the conductor walked away, a well-groomed businessman approached the pair and said, ‘I understand you are Reverend Bounds, and that you and the boy don’t have quite enough to get you to your destination.’ So we are told,” Bounds answered. The businessman quickly enjoined, ‘Well, your fare is covered, Brother Bounds. Have a blessed meeting in Atlanta.’ “