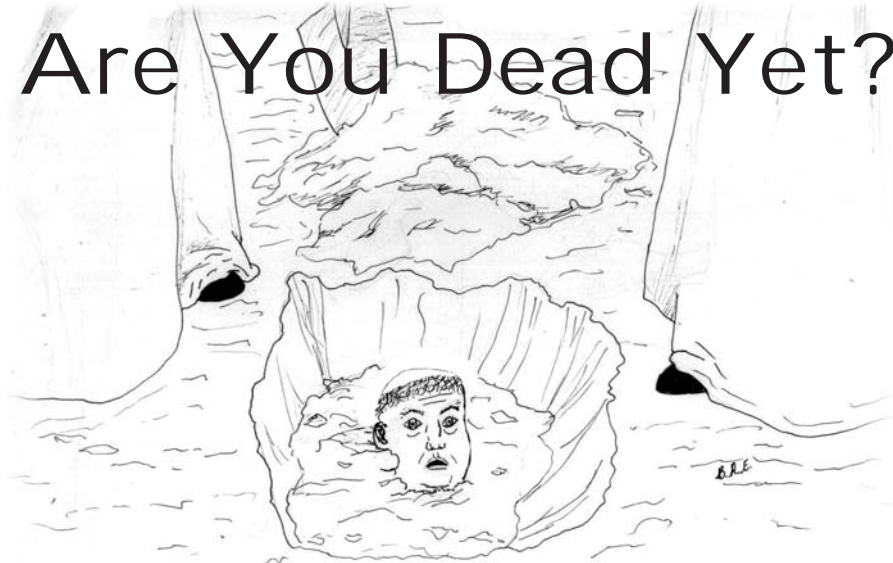


Are You Dead Yet?



Based on a message preached by David Keeling on 10-3-10

Death sounds like a bad thing, doesn't it? Ughhh ... The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 2:15-17, "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."

Whenever some people hear what we preach, or see us, they just see nothing but death. The message that we preach is considered "negative" and "so unattractive." That is what people are really saying when they tell us, "Can't you give it a little more positive ... there's something about this; it just does not seem right ... Oh, I agree with all your words; they are truth and all but, boy, there's just something not right." What they are actually saying is, "There's a smell of death about it." But then others see it, and the same message is "life unto life." It depends on whether a person is dead to the world or whether he has life with this world.

There's a story about a man who had fallen into sin. I think he was a Catholic in a monastery, one of the monks. His fellows dug a deep hole and stuck him in it and asked him, "Are you dead yet?"

He said, "No."

So they started shoveling dirt back into the hole up to his knees and asked again, "Are you dead yet?"

"No."

They shoveled in more dirt, up to his hips this time, and asked, "Are you dead yet?"

"No."

"Are you willing to give up your sin? Are you dead?"

He still said, "No."

So they shoveled up to his armpits full of dirt and asked yet again, "Are you dead yet?"

He said "No," but he was beginning to get a little nervous. They shoveled it up to his neck; now only his head was sticking out above the dirt.

They asked, "Are you dead yet?" He knew the next step would cover his head up; he finally said, "I'm dead, I'm through with that sin, it will kill me." So they dug him out.

They were trying to teach him a point about death—what is it going to take to get us to die unto sin?

Jesus taught that "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." Before grain can produce anything it has to die. It's the same way with man; two worlds cannot live in your life; two lives cannot live in your body. We either have life in Christ or we have the life in the world. We are either dead to God and alive to the world, or dead to the world and alive to Christ. The Bible talks a lot about death and dying. In fact, whenever it speaks of baptism, that's a representation of death.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Ro. 6:1-7

We are buried with him by baptism unto death. When we are baptized, that is a symbol/picture/representation of death that we have gone through.

If you were to die physically right now, what would that mean? That means that everything that's important to you right now would no longer be important, because you are dead. It has no value to you anymore. The life that you would have lived from that point on no longer exists; it's not there, it's gone because you are dead. No matter what age you are, the life in front of you is gone, it's over ... no more.

But then someone would come along and say, "Arise!" After you came to the realization that you had been dead—your life was over, nothing more was ever going to be the same—and then someone came along and said, "Rise again," what would every moment of your life mean to you from that point on? Every moment of that life should be different.

It is the same when we have died to this world; we are dead to this world, it's over. That's the finality of death—it's over ... now arise to a newness of life—a life in Christ. That's what baptism is supposed to be. That's when we have died to ourselves and this world, and from now on every moment of life we have is to be for Christ, because we are living for Him from now on. Our life is gone—we are buried and dead to this world. That's what Romans 6:11 is talking about:

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Dead indeed unto sin" doesn't mean we will not be without struggles or temptations, but right here is how we get victory over them—to die.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. Ga. 6:14

I'm just as dead to the world as the world is to me. Whenever the world looks at me, they see death. The world doesn't want to be around death; they don't like it. Whenever they look at someone who is dead to the world, it's just like them looking at a dead man; they don't want to be around it. And when we look out into the world, that's the way we ought to be too. We ought to see all the world has to offer is just a bunch of death, and not be enticed by it or drawn to it.

A man said to us this weekend, concerning the cross, "Before Jesus died, the cross used to be a bad thing, scary, fearful. But when Jesus died, all the badness went out of it, and now it's a nice thing." That's what's wrong with Chris-

tianity today—their cross doesn't produce death to those who would take it up and follow Jesus. Their cross has become a "nice thing." Their "death" has become a "nice thing." But it doesn't produce the death that produces LIFE in Christ Jesus. Until a man passes through the cross and death, there is no life, no resurrection. Until you die, there is no resurrection; that's why there's so much fruitlessness in Christianity today.



People want to hang the cross around their neck, on the wall, paint pictures of it, put pictures of it on their Bible, hang it all over their churches, glorify it, sing about it ... the cross Jesus died on. But they don't want to get on it themselves and die.

People want to hang the cross around their neck, on the wall, paint pictures of it, put pictures of it on their Bible, hang it all over their churches, glorify it, sing about it ... the cross Jesus died on. But they don't want to get on it themselves and die to themselves. They don't want to die; they want the life, so they pretend they have it. They want a better life, so they quit a lot of their bad deeds and start going to church, but they don't want to *lose* their life. They don't want to face death, but that is the only way to life.

Jesus talked a lot about death:

And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. Mt. 10:38-39

And in another Gospel it says (in the same context), "for my sake and the gospel's." If you keep/find your life, you will lose it. But if you lose your life, you will find it. That's the ONLY way; so whenever people hear the true gospel message they think, "Oh, you are putting a bad light on Christianity." That happens because they

see death there, and that is not attractive to the world; so they want to turn away from it. They turn away from the only thing that can bring real life to them from God. Paul said the world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world. He was dead to this world.

Before I began following the Lord, I was alive to this world. I loved this world, I wanted to be a part of this world, I didn't want to miss anything ... wanted to be involved in everything this world had to offer. I liked the flashy things, liked to have the best. I didn't care to be different than the modern world, in fact, I loved being different. But it was still the world; my world, my life. My dream in life was to have a huge farm with registered cattle and horses, have sales and show them, and really "make a big splash." I used to think that if I didn't have a pair of white ostrich boots and a \$200-\$300 cowboy hat and diamond rings on my hand

... I loved that. But when I died, I didn't want that anymore.

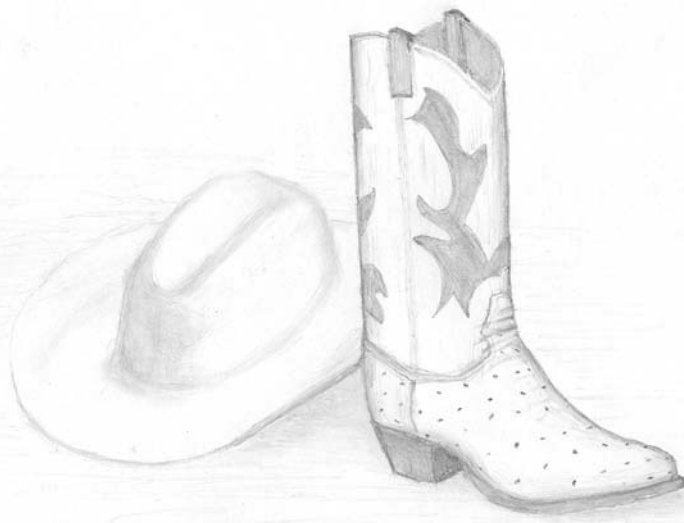
A lot of my friends, scattered around the country, were into auctions. They'd travel all over and make a big show at the auctions—it was so exciting to go to these big sales and see these cattle and horses bring big prices ... go to the shows and do all these things. I have friends in the auction business that lived this life; I thought that was neat, I loved it.

After I became a Christian and was living for the Lord, my brothers had bought the sale barn from one of the commission companies, and the first week that I started wearing suspenders when I was a Menonite, one of my brothers couldn't make it to the sale that day. So they called me and said, "You are going to have to go into the sale ring and be the ring man." On the first day that I put my suspenders on, had my beard, my plain blue clothes, no cowboy hat, no white boots, no big belt buckle ... suspenders and a beard ... they put me right in the ring where I had always wanted to be, right in the center of everything, among all the people I had always wanted to impress. There I was ...

Do you know how to die? One way is to go to the people that you are trying to impress and stand right up in front of them, but humbly dressed just exactly the opposite from what you would normally do to impress them. That will help produce death to those things in you. But when you die like that, Christ can then live in you.

Dead to the world ... this is the glory of the cross of Christ!

What do you love in this world? The best thing to do is face it, stand up against it right in front of everyone you know that that's all they care about, and openly die to it. Or would you rather have their praise? Would you rather be dead to Christ and alive to their applause? Alive to their envy? Or alive unto Christ? "He that findeth his life shall lose it, but he that loses his life for Christ and the Gospel shall find it unto everlasting life." Be real with yourself and ask, "Am I dead yet?"



I used to think that if I didn't have a pair of white ostrich boots and a \$200-\$300 cowboy hat ...

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. Co. 3:1-3

Bro. Kevn Stewart shared with me a couple of times concerning what the verse "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" means. This happens, for example, when we are on the streets preaching and people (as they often do) walk or drive by and holler at us, "GET A LIFE!"

Do you know why they say that to us? Because our life is hid in Christ Jesus. They can't see our life; all they see is our death to the world. Our life is hid to them, because of their blindness.

I used to want to be a big shining light as a Christian—the world does too. They want everyone to know, "I'm a Christian." They get in a little bit of trouble and they say, "I'm a Christian ... I'm a pastor ... you can trust me!" They want people to know, they want to be a witness, and a lot of times it gains them a little bit of respect ... for why, I don't know. But it does, because people can still see their old life. But the lovers of this world are not going to recognize the life of the true Christian; all they are going to see is death, because our lives are hid with Christ in God. It's a blessing, because ...

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Co. 3:4

... and all those people who thought they had life in this world and on this earth are going to find that when Christ appears, their "life" was actually death. And all their glory will vanish away ... sink right into hell, because they kept their life. They didn't pass through that strait and narrow gate of death; they kept their life.

There are a lot of things we would get a hold of if we could just get dead. We can't grow fruit, have life—we are not going to rise to life—until we die. What can the world do to us when we are dead? You can't kill a dead man. I've already died, what life are you going to take away from me?

I think that's one of the reasons why people get so hurt by churches—whenever they find out the church failed them, they get bitter because their life was in the church, instead of being dead to self.

Are you dead yet? Face death, take up the cross, and let it kill you in this world; let it crucify you. Remember His death until He returns.

For we are the savor of death unto death to this world, but unto God we are the savor of life unto life. Our life is hid in this world, but when He returns, our life shall appear. All that looked like death to the world will just bloom and explode into life in that time, and all this trash that looks like life in this world will just crumble like ashes into hell.

Praise the Lord! ~

David Keeling lives at Monett, MO, where he ministers at "The Church of Monett." David's early ambition was to be a millionaire by the time he was 30. He was well on his way to achieving his goal, until he decided to become a real disciple of Jesus. He now spends his time in weekly street-preaching and making disciples in various parts of the world, with regular trips to India, the Philippines, and Latin America. You can listen to the recorded message from which this article was taken, at <http://www.earlychurchtruth.com/englishsermon/areyoudeadyet.html>

What's wrong with this picture?



You have probably seen something like it on a tract somewhere, with a title along the lines of "How to Get to Heaven." But the picture is seriously in error, doctrinally. What is that error?

The man is misusing the cross! The man is supposed to be carrying the cross, not using it as a bridge. Nowhere are we told to use the cross as a bridge to heaven. But we are told, by Jesus Himself, that unless we take up the cross and follow Him, it is impossible to be His disciple. We must use the cross just like He did.

Readers of the previous issue will remember the comparison between Anabaptists and Evangelicals. The above picture and the one below graphically show the difference between the two theological mindsets. Paul told the Galatians, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Many people stop there, and assume that Paul was referring to what Jesus did on His cross. But, the verse doesn't end there! He continues, saying, "... by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The cross that Paul gloried in was the cross of Christ in the sense of being just like the one Christ used, only Paul was the one bearing it now, following in Christ's steps. And through that daily death to self, sin, and the flesh, Christ could then live in Paul and glorify him. Without Paul taking up the cross, this could not have taken place.

Have you taken up your cross, or do you just plan to use it as a bridge after your body dies? Sorry, but the cross is not a bridge; it is an instrument of death to be used while we are on this earth, not afterwards. ~

