

The Dying, Fruitful Life

John 12:24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25 The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. 27 "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."

John 10:15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-- and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd 17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-- only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

1John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

We usually think in terms of opposites when we speak of life and death. Life is growth, death is no growth. Life is joy, death is sorrow. Life is good, death is bad. Life is strength, death is weakness. Life is unity, death is separation. On the surface this is true. But on a deeper level, we see Jesus continually making the claim that death brings life, growth, productivity, yes even glory! The one who refuses to lay his life down, refuses dying to himself, will be the lonely, fruitless, empty, joyless, slave of sin. The one who willingly, voluntarily, purposefully, and fully lays his life down to serve and follow Christ, dying to himself, is the one who experiences the fruitful, joy-filled, fullness of life as a follower of the Christ who laid down His life for us.

This "laid down" life is seen in the context of His crucifixion. There are five obvious truths in the above passages.

He laid down His life willingly. It would not be a "laid-down" life if it were a "put-down" death. It was the fact of His willing submission to crucifixion that made it a "laid down" life. It was not the hands of the Roman soldiers that *put Him down* on the cross. It was His own surrendered will that *laid down His life* on that cross. The Father's love was experienced by the Son in the willing submission of Him laying down His life. (John 10:17)

He laid down His life fully. He laid His life down completely to die as our sin-bearing, wrath receiving, sinner-rescuing substitute.

He laid down His life in obedience. It was commanded by the Father and obeyed by the Son.

He laid down His life for us. This sacrifice was others' centered. It was a sacrifice for the good of others.

He laid down His life to glorify the Father's name. This was the over-arching desire of the Son of God, and must be ours.

Jesus calls us to the same surrender. To lay our lives down to be fully used of Him in every way is His command. We too must lay our lives down willingly, fully, obediently, for others, to glorify the name of the Father. This is what it means to be a follower of Christ. Anything less is confession without possession.

Self Check

1. Am I laying down my life in full submission to His will today? Is there a time I was more "laid down" to His will than today? If so, what's the obstacle now?
2. List at least five circumstances in which you have significantly "laid down" your will to do His will, thus laying your life down?
3. What fruit have you seen come from laying your life down, rather than taking things into your own hands demanding your own will and way?

For Further Study

1. Read again the John 12:24-28 passage. Note how Jesus struggled with the call to the cross. He wouldn't ask the Father to change His plan, yet Jesus struggled with the carrying of it out. He prayed one of the shortest, most potent prayers every known to man..."Father, glorify Your name!" God did! And God immediately assured His Son of the answer to His cry.
2. Paul showed the same "laid-down life" principle in 2 Corinthians - search for this principle in chapters 1, 4, 11, 12.

"Lord, You laid down Your life willingly, fully, obediently, for me, and for the glory of Your Father's Name. I give you my praise, my life, my soul, my all to be a living sacrifice to You. I surrender my life willingly, fully, obediently, for others, for the glory of your Father's name, to do Your will. Use me, Lord. Use me up. Give me a daily-dying-fruitful life that brings you joy and glory. I ask this in your Name, O Laid-Down-Lamb and Exalted Son of God, AMEN."

Remember, you are very special to us and we pray for you.

Living with leaving in view.... John 9:4

Ron& Val

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable,
changed by The Immutable, running after The Irresistible
with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows,
spending our time on eternity,
owning nothing yet possessing everything
that matters and lasts.
We are Pilgrims in Paradox.
Welcome to THE JOURNEY