

Death bringing Life

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Let us ponder over the words of the Lord Jesus and also reflect on His life as the perfect example for all of us. Let us turn to **John 12: 23-24**.

John 12: 23-24

- 23 And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Many messages have been preached on this subject of the wheat: The grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying and bearing fruit. What, at the heart of it, is the main issue that we should concentrate upon?

There are many different lessons that we can learn. There are many important principles that can be derived from this. But today, I want to concentrate on one major aspect that has to do with the life of the Lord Jesus and how He is an example for us, how we should live our lives.

He says, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

Sometimes, we think of the grain of wheat falling to the earth and dying as referring to dealing with our self-life. We deal with our self-life so that something fruitful can come about.

But in this context, we see that the Lord Jesus here was speaking first about Himself. He says, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified", and it is in this context that He says, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone".

So He was saying that He had to die; He was going to die. It was a reference to the cross. The Lord Jesus did not have any self-life. There was no sin in His life. There was no need for Him to deal with any selfishness within Him.

So what is the meaning of Him falling into the earth and dying? What is the meaning of this death He is talking about? Why does He say that "unless it dies, it remains alone"?

As I think about it, I see one way we can appreciate it is consider the life of the Lord Jesus. Why did the Lord Jesus die on the cross? Did He have to do it? Was it something that He was obliged to do? Is it His responsibility that He must do so?

The answer basically is "No." The Lord Jesus did not owe it to us to die for us. We deserve death because we chose to go our own way. We sinned and therefore, we deserve the punishment of God, the wrath of God, the judgment of God. It is our own voluntary choice. We chose to go our own way.

The Lord Jesus did not have to die for us. He could have just continued in His own being to carry on in His perfection, in His peace, without having to go through all the pain and suffering of the incarnation and dying on the cross.

It was not necessary in the sense of His obligation. Why then did He do it?

He tells us He did it so that there can be something good that can come out of it: It can bear fruit. He says, "If the grain of wheat does not die, it remains by itself alone". If the grain is a good grain, it carries on, it remains a grain. It just is a grain. But if the grain dies, then it can bear fruit - many, many more grains can come out of it.

The Lord Jesus used this to bring about the picture for us that as a result of His death, His suffering, out of the meaningfulness of His heart, there can come about many more people who will have richness in their lives, meaningful hearts, people who become like Him.

It is because of His death that now, Christ can be formed in us, that we can become like Him. We can also have this kind of attitude and spirit.

Many of us, when we go through life and we see different situations - people in need, suffering, going through difficulties - sometimes we may say, "It is none of my business. Why should I care? I can just live my life. I am a responsible person, I live well. Why should I care?"

Well, even if you live well, even if you do not owe anything to anyone else, if you just continue by yourself, then, at the very, very most, you will just be a grain of wheat that remains by itself.

If you want your life to be fruitful, if you want your life to really contribute to others, then, you must also learn the principle of death. We should no longer think in terms of "Must I do that? Is it my responsibility? Is it my obligation? Why must I do this or that?"

We should instead think: “Is it a good thing? Is it meaningful? Would it bring about something really good and meaningful in the eyes of God? Will it really contribute something worthwhile to the lives of other people?”

When the grain of wheat dies, it becomes a wheat plant, there is a change. Something takes place and the wheat plant produces many more grains of wheat.

When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He went through something He had never experienced before. He went through that kind of pain and suffering and agony He had never experienced before. Something happened. When He took on the sins of the world, it was a very terrible experience.

But as a result of that, something happened: There came about a wheat plant. The body of Christ came about as a result of His giving up His life for us, so that when now we repent and we are identified with Him, we become a member of the body of Christ. And we become part of the fruit that He brings about.

God has called us, not just to be individual grains of wheat, but that we should be united together in the body of Christ.

And the Lord Jesus has shown us the perfect example, that we should live our lives that way. As we give up our lives for the purposes of God according to His calling, we live by what is meaningful and good and not because we are required to do it, we must do it, we have an obligation to do it. We do it because it is good, it is meaningful to God. Then, we can produce much fruit, we can contribute something meaningful.

God has called us. Do we believe Him? Do we trust Him? Are we prepared to exercise faith in Him? God is faithful. He always will be. Will we then do our part as members of the body of Christ – in our appreciation, contribute, receive, interact, relate as God calls us and chooses?

We must be grateful to God for what He has done for us personally. Unless we are deeply grateful to God and unless our lives are properly given to God, our relationship with other people will not be a meaningful thing.

So the first thing is we have to learn first to be deeply grateful to Him for what He has done for us, and in so doing, give up our lives to Him, prepared to die, give up what we may call our rights to our lives, offer it up to Him to be what He wants us to be, to contribute, to do whatever is meaningful to Him.

Let us not think in terms of what we want for ourselves personally, but think in terms of what is really good for God's kingdom, for eternity, for all of mankind, for all of God's creation.

Can we contribute something of significance? The answer is "Yes". God has created us in His image; we can contribute very much. But this is the path: The grain of wheat must die.

So, let us ask Him to help us to understand what He has done for us, and how we should follow His example, give up our lives to Him, live by what is truly good, focus not just on ourselves and our wants and our needs, but focus on what is in the heart of God, what is important to Him, what is meaningful to Him.