

# A GOOD DEATH

*Why* this title?

*Because...*

...I love the English language and the way it has with words.

The word 'Oxymoron' does perhaps sound rather odd, and the above title is an example.

Dictionaries state that the oxymoron is an apparently self-contradictory statement which usually points out a poignant truth and is sometimes coupled with wry humour.

For example: 'Military Intelligence', 'Efficient Government' and (the dark coupling of) 'Friendly Fire' are oxymorons, as is the more neutral phrase 'Bitter Sweet'.

There are thousands more examples, including the Biblical statements 'He who will save his life must lose it', and Christians are to be 'Lively Stones'.

'A Good Death' sounds dark and strange to our ears yet for us as Christians it's a positive statement when it refers to our baptism.

Let me explain.

In counselling, the minister will often turn to Romans Ch 6 for the parallel between Jesus Christ's death and our death to our old ways. Verse 4 in *The Message Bible* says it so well: 'When we went under the water we left our old country of sin behind;

when we came up out of the water we entered into the new country of Grace – a new life in a new land!’

It explains that we are to be a New Creation - the old has gone and the new has come, the death of the old man and the accepting of Jesus’ life in our place.

It is also stressed that that we have not earned baptism in any way by changing our own lives, and that baptism remains an outward expression of the inward repentance given to us that we have accepted the Grace of Jesus on the Cross, and that we do willingly submit to the leading of God’s Spirit to transform and to change us.

I always appreciate being reminded of these wonders every time I serve in a baptism, thinking back to my own experience all those years ago.

The Bible explains that in our natural human state we are dead to God and alive to sin and that God wills to reverse this natural human condition. God wants us alive to *Him* and dead to sin. In other words He wants us both dead *and* alive! When we are ‘In Christ’ we are both dead to sin through His death and alive to God in His life.

Colossians 3.3 says ‘You died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.’ (KJV).

I have also appreciated that because Jesus Christ was crucified from before the founding of our Universe (Revelation 13.8 and many other sister scriptures), my own forgiveness has always been available but I just didn’t understand it to claim it until I became a Christian. So I realize that God says to us all ‘I *have* forgiven you – now repent’. In other words He is saying ‘Say yes to Me, and accept what has always been there for you so that My Grace can now work in your life.’

So for whom has Christ not died? We just didn't know it so the process hadn't started. God *loves* His Creation and He has died for all.

It's wonderful to realize that there is absolutely *nothing* we can do to either gain or to maintain the Grace of God. It is a free gift, and what a response *that* encourages..

No wonder the angels rejoice at a 'Good Death'!