

When You Want to Die

By Brian Coatney

In the movie *Ransom*, an evil kidnapper snatches the son of Tom Mullen (Mel Gibson), threatening to murder him if Mullen doesn't pay a huge ransom. In one scene, Tom Mullen, gripped by feelings of suicidal depression, looks at the railing of the balcony that he is on and feels the powerful urge to jump. Instead he draws back into walking out the agonizing path ahead of him.

Everyone experiences deep losses at some time. Only the determined callous appear to succeed in cutting off those nerve endings that make us so vulnerably human. My worst time occurred in the early 90's, when a long career of self justified anger led to out of control behavior that included a marital separation. For the first time my wife set boundaries that meant that I could not act or speak any way that I wanted to without consequences. Neither of us wanted a divorce, but to maintain order in the home for herself and our two teenage sons, that meant that I would not get my needs met for some time.

The depression I let myself live in was no different really than for the common lot of mankind. But when we go through something, it can seem like no one else has ever experienced what we are going through. Some call this self-outlook terminal uniqueness, and I sure had it. At the time, desperate for a job, a

local factory hired me where one of my duties included cutting stock. I spent hours at that saw wishing I could be dead. I didn't want to die, but I didn't want to live.

What was the answer? A scripture came to mind repeatedly during this time, one that I didn't grasp: "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:4 NASB). I lost count of how many times when I wished I could die that this scripture came to mind, with no illumination on my part. Only a couple of years later did I see the point. Until we do we think that we are alive, but we are not: we live in the lie of thinking that we are independent selves and that Christ exists to pump up the self-life that we have always known as us. We haven't really gotten to the bare truth of life on terms that mean Christ plus nothing, meaning that only Christ is life.

For our justification, I had seen that only the atoning work of Christ forgives our sins and justifies us with God. But I had not really seen that Christ's provision for daily life is that He lives it 100% without anything from me except receptivity. As Norman Grubb put it so well, "Self improvement is impossible," or "Self improvement is the big lie."

So I kept on cutting stock, depressed, all the while that the Holy Spirit kept quietly telling me the truth. Paul tells us in Galatians 2:20 that we have been crucified with Christ and that we no longer live: Christ lives in us. He details the basis of this in Romans 6 where we learn that Christ became us on the Cross, the sin-Satan indwelled body, so that he could die as us. So we

were in Him in His death, but then also His burial and resurrection. Truly we are new creations.

If we do not know this, however, we continue striving to be what only Christ can be in us, thinking that we must live and figure out and solve all of our problems. But only one central problem ever existed, and that was the Satanic deception that we must try to be like Christ. That's why I so often say, "Trying to be like Christ is a sin." When we see that we are only vessels in which He lives His life, then we drop that, get our focus off of ourselves as living, and look at Christ. Self-absorption drops off. Christ is our life as Colossians 3:4 says.

When I got sick enough of myself and what I could do, I found it refreshing to look only at Christ and consider myself a dead man. This brought incredible relief. But then amazingly, I reappeared as I person that I had never known. I popped back. But this new Brian I recognized as an effortless being of Christ's own making, and this Brian only continued in experience as I looked only at Christ. For when I dropped back into self-absorption, the new Brian disappeared. He had existed since I became a Christian, but I could not know him until I could accept the death of the old Brian that took place 2000 years ago.

Truly, when one becomes a Christian, he or she died 2000 years ago. The deception that blocks this wonderful discovery hangs on through the deception that we have to try to be like Christ. But how can a vessel be like Christ? It can't. Christ lives His life in the vessel, even uniting to it as one spirit in a glorious

union. So face to face I behold the Lord and experience who I really am. Looking at Him, I find myself. But isn't that what the Bible says: we lose our lives to find them. That's why I love the Holy Spirit's necessary reminders that I died a long time ago. Pain and suffering come, and we long to depart and be with Christ as Paul puts it. That day will come. In the meantime, on the identity level, we have already died and risen, and knowing that makes all the difference.