

**Articles and Sermons :: Twenty motives for Christians to be willing to die - Brooks****Twenty motives for Christians to be willing to die - Brooks - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/9/22 16:26**

by Thomas Brooks, June 8, 1657

Twenty motives for Christians to be willing to die

Ah, Christians, Christians! how justly may that father be angry with his child who is unwilling to come home; and that husband be angry with his wife who is unwilling to ride to him in a rainy day, or to cross the seas to enjoy him? And is not this your case? is not this your case? I know it is. Well, Christians! let me a little expostulate the case with you, that if it be possible I may work your hearts into a willingness to die, yes, to desire death, to long for death—so that you may come to a full fruition of all that is reserved in heaven for you! And that I may, I beseech you, Christians, tell me,

Tell me, O Christian—can death dissolve that glorious UNION which is between you and Christ? No! Romans 8:35-39. Why, why then are you unwilling to die—as long as in death your union with Christ holds good? As in death Saul and Jonathan were not parted, 2 Sam. 1:23, so in death a believer and Christ are not parted—but more closely and firmly united. That is not death—but life, which joins the dying man to Christ; and that is not a life—but death, that separates the living man from Christ. As it is impossible for the leaven that is in the dough to be separated from the dough after it is once mixed, for it turns the nature of the dough into itself; so it is impossible, either in life or death, for the saints ever to be separated from Christ; for Christ, in respect of union, is in the saints as closely as the leaven is in the very dough, so incorporated one into another as if Christ and they were one lump, John 17:20-21; John 15:1-6. But,

For I shall but touch upon things, tell me, O Christian, who are unwilling to die, Whether death can dissolve or untie that MARRIAGE-KNOT that by the Spirit on Christ's side, and by faith on your part—is knit between Christ and your soul? No! Death cannot untie that knot, Hosea 2:19-20. Why, why then, O Christian, are you unwilling to die, as long as the marriage-knot holds fast between Christ and your soul? Mat. 25:1-2; Romans 7:1-4. I readily grant that death dissolves that marriage-knot which is knit between man and wife; but neither death nor devil can ever dissolve the marriage-knot that is knit between Christ and the believing soul! Sin cannot dissolve that marriage-knot that is knit between Christ and a believer; and if sin cannot, then certainly death, which came in by sin, cannot. Though sin can do more than death—yet sin cannot make null and void that glorious marriage which is between Christ and the soul; therefore a Christian should not be unwilling to die. Jer. 3:1-5, 12-14, compared. But,

Tell me, O Christian—can death, O Christian, dissolve that glorious COVENANT that God has taken you into? No! Death can never dissolve that covenant: Jer. 32:40, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn a way from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts—that they shall not depart from me." Though Abraham is dead—yet God is Abraham's God still, Mat. 22:30-32. By covenant, and by virtue of this everlasting covenant, Abraham shall be raised and glorified. Oh then, why should you be afraid of death? why should you be unwilling to die?

When David was upon his dying bed, he drew his strongest consolation out of this well of salvation—the covenant: 2 Sam. 23:5, "Is it not true my house is with God? For He has established an everlasting covenant with me, ordered and secured in every detail. Will He not bring about my whole salvation and my every desire?" Dear hearts! the covenant remains firm and good between you and the Lord, both in life and in death; and therefore there is no reason why you should be unwilling to die.

There are three things which are impossible for God to do, namely—to die, to lie, or deny himself, or that gracious covenant that he has made with his people; and therefore death should be more desirable than terrible to gracious souls. But

Tell me, O Christian—can death dissolve that LOVE which is between the Lord and your soul? Psalm 116:15; Deut. 7:7-8. No, death cannot! For his love is not founded upon any worth or excellency in me, nor upon any work or service done by me. God's love is free—he loves because he will love. All motives to love are taken out of that bosom which is love and sweetness itself. His love is everlasting, it is like himself; Jer. 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you;" John 13:1, "Whom he loved, he loved to the end." "In a surge of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but I will have compassion on you with everlasting love, says the Lord your Redeemer

. For this is like the days of Noah to Me: when I swore that the waters of Noah would never flood the earth again, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you. Though the mountains move and the hills shake, My love will not be removed from you and My covenant of peace will not be shaken, says your compassionate Lord." Isaiah 54:8-10

The love of Jesus Christ was to Lazarus when dead (John 11:11), "Our friend Lazarus sleeps." By all which it is most evident that death cannot dissolve that precious love which is between the Lord and his children. Oh! why then are they afraid to die? Why then do not they long to die—that they may be in the everlasting arms of divine love! The love of the Lord is everlasting; it is a love which never dies, which never decays, nor waxes cold. It is like the stone asbestos, of which Solinus writes, that being once hot, it can never be cooled again.

Death is nothing but a bringing of a loving Christ and loving souls together! Why, then, should not the saints rather desire it, than fear it or be dismayed at it? But,

Can death, O you believing soul, dissolve those gracious grants, or those grants of grace which the Lord has pledged to you? Such as the grant of reconciliation, the grant of acceptance, the grant of justification, the grant of adoption, the grant of remission, etc. No! death cannot dissolve any of these gracious grants. Romans 11:29, "for God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable." Why then, O Christian, are you unwilling to die? Indeed, were it in the power of death to make void any of those noble and gracious grants which God has pledged to you, you might be afraid and unwilling to die; but that being a work too great, and too hard for death to accomplish—why should you not, in a holy triumphing way, say with the apostle, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. 15:55-57.

A Christian, upon the account of what is laid up for him, may and ought divinely to out-brave death, as this precious saint did: a little before she breathed out her last into the bosom of Christ, she called for a candle; Come, says she, and see death; and this she spoke smilingly, out-braving death in a holy sense. Being free both from the pains of death, and from the fear of death, she knew him in whom she had believed, 2 Tim. 1:12. She knew right well that death could not dissolve those gracious grants which God had pledged to her; and therefore when she came to it, she made no more of it to die—than we do to dine! But,

Tell me, Christians, did not Christ come to deliver you from the fear of death? Yes! He did come into the world, and did take our nature upon him—that he might deliver us from the fear of death, Heb. 2:14-15. Why, then, should you be unwilling to die? Tell me, has not Christ disarmed death of all its hurting power—and taken away its sting, that it cannot harm you? Yes, he has! 1 Cor. 15:55-57. Why then should you be unwilling to die? Tell me, souls, will not Christ be with you in that hour? Will he not stand by you, though others should desert you? Yes! we have it from his own word, that he will be present with us, and that he will neither, living nor dying, leave us, nor forsake us, Psalm 23:4, Heb. 13:5-6. Why then should you be unwilling to die? Tell me, O trembling Christians, shall death be any more to you than a change? a change of place, a change of company, a change of employment, a change of enjoyment? Certainly! Death to us will be but a change; yes, the happiest change that ever we met with, Job 14:14, John 11:26, 1 Thes. 4:14. Why then should you be unwilling to die, seeing that to die is nothing but to change earth for heaven, rags for robes, crosses for crowns, and prisons for thrones, etc.? Said Cyprian, Let him fear death—who is opposed to go to Christ!

But tell me once more, Christians, has not Jesus Christ, by his lying in the grave, sanctified the grave, and perfumed and sweetened the grave? Has he not, by his blood and death, purchased for you a soft and easy bed in the grave? Yes! We believe he has done all this for us. Oh why then should you be unwilling to die?

Once more, tell me, Christians, will not Jesus Christ raise you out of the grave after you have taken a short nap? Will he not cause you to hear his voice? Will he not call you out of that sleeping-chamber, the grave, and bring you to immortality and glory? Yes! We believe he will, John 6:39-40, 1 Cor 15, 1 Thes. 4:14-18. Oh why then should you be unwilling to die? Oh why should you not, upon all these accounts, long for it—and whenever it comes, readily and willingly, cheerfully and sweetly, embrace it? O Christians, Christians! let but your hopes and your hearts be more fixed upon the things that are reserved in heaven for you—and then you will neither fear death, nor feel it when it comes! But,

Death will perfectly cure you of all physical and spiritual diseases at once! Such as the aching head and the unbelieving heart; the ulcerous body and the polluted soul. Now your bodies are full of ails, full of aches, full of diseases, full of illnesses and distempers—so that your wisest physicians know not what to say to you, nor what to do with you, nor how to cure you. It is often with your bodies—"from the sole of the feet, even to the crown of the head, was full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores," Isaiah 1:6.

But now death will perfectly cure you of all! Death will do that for you, which you could not do for yourselves! Death will do that for you, which all your friends could not do for you! Death will do that for you, which the ablest and wisest physicians could not do for you. It will cure you of every ache, of every ailment, etc.

At Stratford-Bow, in Queen Mary's days, there was burnt a lame man and a blind man at one stake. The lame man, after he was chained, casting away his crutch, bade the blind man be of good comfort, for death, said he, will cure us both—you of your blindness, and I of my lameness!

Ah, Christians! death will cure you of all your infirmities, of all your distempers; and why, then, should you be unwilling to die? Maecenas, the heathen, said that he had rather live with many diseases than die; but I hope better things of you, for whom Christ has died.

And as death will cure all your bodily diseases, so it will cure all your soul-distempers also! Death is not the death of the man—but the death of his sin! Sin was the midwife which brought death into the world—and death shall be the grave to bury sin.

What is death but the burial of vices?—Ambrose. Death shall do that for a Christian—which all his duties could never do—which all his graces could never do—which all his experiences could never do—which all ordinances could never do. It shall at once free him fully, perfectly, and perpetually from all sin—yes, from all possibility of ever sinning again!

The Persians had a certain day in the year in which they used to kill all serpents and venomous creatures; such a day as that will the day of death be to their sins who are savingly interested in the Savior. When Samson died—the Philistines also died together with him. Just so, when a believer dies—his sins die with him. Death came in by sin, and sin goes out by death. As the worm kills the fruit which bred it—so death kills sin which bred it, Heb. 12:23, Romans 6:7, 1 Cor. 15:26.

And why, then, should Christians be afraid of death, or unwilling to die, seeing death gives them ease from infirmities and weaknesses, from all aches and pains, griefs and gripings, distempers and diseases, both of body and soul?

Homer reports of his Achilles, that he had rather be a servant to a poor country clown here in this world, than to be a king to all the souls departed. The truth is, that most heathens have preferred the meanest life on earth above all the hopes they had of a better life; but I hope better things of you, Christians; and that upon this very ground, that death will certainly and perfectly cure you of all bodily and soul distempers at once! But,

Is not your dying day—an INEVITABLE day? Why, yes, yes! Why, then, should you be afraid to die? Why should you be unwilling to die, seeing that your dying day is a day which cannot be put off? The daily spectacles of mortality which we see before our eyes clearly evince this truth—that all must die. It is a statute-law in heaven that all must die. All men and women are made up of dust, and by the law of heaven they must return to dust. All have sinned, and therefore all must die. The core of that apple which Adam ate sticks in the throats of all his children, and will at length choke them all one by one!

Masius says that when Noah went into the ark, he took the bones of Adam with him, and that when he came out of the ark, he divided them among his sons, giving the head, as the chief part, unto his first-born, and therein as it were saying unto them, Let not this delivery from the flood make you secure; behold your first parent, and the beginning of mankind; you must all, and all who come from you, go unto the dust to him. What day is there that passes over our heads wherein the Lord does not, by others' mortality, preach many sermons of mortality to us? Therefore why should we be unwilling to pay that debt that all owe, and that all must pay, and that so many daily pay before our eyes? But,

A believer's dying day is his BEST day. Ambrose speaks of some who lamented men's births and celebrated their deaths. Why then should he be unwilling to die? Eccles. 7:1, "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth." In respect of profit, pleasure, peace, safety, company, glory—a believer's last day is his best day. Why then should a believer be unwilling to die? But,

A believer's dying day is his RESTING day. It is his resting day from sin, from sorrow, from affliction, from temptation, from desertion, from dissension, from vexation, from persecution, and from all bodily labor. And therefore why should a believer be unwilling to die, seeing that for him to die is no more but to rest? But of this rest I have spoken largely before; and therefore a touch may be enough in this place. But,

The saints' dying day is their REAPING day. Now they shall reap the fruit of all the prayers that ever they have made, and of all the sermons that ever they have heard, and of all the tears that ever they have shed, and of all the sighs and groans that ever they have fetched, and of all the good words that ever they have spoke, and of all the good works that ever they have done, and of all the great things that ever they have suffered. Yes, now they shall reap the fruit of many good services, which themselves had forgot, 2 Cor. 9:6; Gal. 6:7-9. "Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?" Mat. 25:34-41. They had done many good works and forgot them—but Christ records them, remembers them, and rewards them.

Some Christians have bad memories. But our Lord Jesus, as he has a soft and tender heart, so he has an iron memory; he remembers not only the best and greatest services—but also the least and lowest services which have been done by his people; and he remembers them to reward them. A bit of bread, a cup of cold water, shall not pass without a reward.

Christians, however Christ may seem to forget your labor of love, and to take no notice, or but little, of many good services that you have done for him, his name, his gospel, his people—but yet when you die, when you come to heaven, you shall then reap a plentiful, a glorious crop, as the fruit of that good seed, that for a time has seemed to be buried and lost, Proverbs 11:25; Psalm 126:5. When mortality shall put on immortality, you shall then find that bread which long before was cast upon the waters, Eccles. 11:1-6. Therefore be not, O Christian, afraid to die! Be not, O Christian, unwilling to die—for your dying day will be your reaping day. But,

Your dying-day, O believer! will be your TRIUMPHING day! John 11:26. Now you shall gloriously triumph over sin, Satan, the world, your own base heart, yes, and over death itself!

I readily grant, that if you consider believers as in union with Christ, as he was a public person, they have then already triumphed over principalities and powers; what Christ did in his greatest transaction, he did as a public person, representing all his chosen ones; he suffered as a public person, representing all his elect; he died as a public person, representing all his precious ones; he rose, he ascended, and now he sits in heaven as a public person, representing all his children: Eph. 2:6, "And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Christ has taken up his children's rooms in heaven aforehand; Christ has already taken possession of heaven in their names, in their steads, they do now sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And so when Jesus Christ spoiled "principalities and powers, and triumphed openly over them on the cross," he did this as a public person, representing all his children who triumphed in his triumph over all the powers of darkness; and therefore, in this sense, believers have already triumphed. Yes, and I readily grant, that believers, even in this life, by virtue of their union and communion with Christ, and by virtue of his gracious presence, influence, and assistance—they do always triumph, as the apostle speaks: 2 Cor. 2:14, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ."

Believers now are more than conquerors, they are triumphers over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Christ so routed Satan upon the cross, says Ignatius, that he never since either hears or sees the cross—but he falls a-shaking and trembling. Believers, by holding forth to Satan the cross of Christ in the arms of faith, and by their laying hold on his cross and pleading his cross, they do easily, they do frequently overcome him and triumph over him.

But notwithstanding all this, ah! how often does the best of saints find the world, the flesh, and the devil triumphing sadly over them? Now a Christian triumphs over Satan, Romans 7:14-25; by and by Christ withdraws—and then Satan triumphs over the believer. Now the believer leads captivity captive; at another time the believer is led captive. This day a saint gets the topmost of Satan, and beats him quite out of the field; the next day Satan draws forth and falls on with new forces, with new arguments, with fresh strength, and then puts a Christian to a retreat, ay, too often to a rout. In many a battle a Christian is whipped, and much ado he has to come off with his life.

Oh but now death brings a Christian to a full, perfect, complete, absolute, and perpetual triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now a Christian shall forever have the necks of these enemies under his feet; now these enemies shall be forever disarmed, so that they shall never be able to make resistance more, they shall never strike stroke more, they shall never affront a believer more, they shall never lead a believer captive more, etc. Oh why then should believers be afraid to die, be unwilling to die, seeing that their dying day is their triumphing day? But,

As a believer's dying-day is his triumphing-day, so a believer's dying-day is his MARRIAGE-DAY. Hosea 2:19-20. In this life we are only betrothed to Christ; in the life to come we shall be married to Christ. Here on earth Christ and the believe

r are near—<sup>^</sup>but death will bring Christ and the believer nearer. Here on earth Christ and the believer have agreed between them, only the marriage-knot must be tied in heaven, the marriage-supper must be kept in heaven, Rev. 19:5-10. And, therefore, several of the martyrs on their suffering-days, on their dying-days, they have invited several to their marriage, as they have phrased it, knowing right well, that their dying-days would be their marriage-days to Christ! The very thoughts of which has so raised and cheered, so warmed and inflamed their hearts, that they have made nothing of death, that they have outbraved death, that they have, to the great joy of their friends, and to the amazement and astonishment of their enemies, more resolutely, friendly, and sweetly embraced death, than they have their nearest and dearest relations! But in the

(14.) A Christian's dying day is his TRANSPLANTING-DAY. Death transplants a believer from earth to heaven; from misery to glory, Job 14:14. Death to a saint is nothing but the taking of a sweet flower out of this wilderness—<sup>^</sup>and planting of it in the garden of paradise! It is nothing but a taking of a lily from among thorns—<sup>^</sup>and planting of it among those sweet roses of heaven which God delights to wear always in his bosom. Death is nothing but the taking off of a believer fully from the stock of the first Adam—<sup>^</sup>and the planting of him perfectly and perpetually into that glorious stock, the second Adam, the Lord Jesus, who is blessed forever. Death is nothing but the taking off the believer from a more barren soil—<sup>^</sup>and planting of him in a more fruitful soil. Here on earth some Christians bring forth thirty, others sixty, and others a hundred-fold, Mat. 13:8, 23; but heaven is so fruitful a soil, that there are none there but such as abound in the fruits of righteousness and holiness—<sup>^</sup>but such as bring forth a thousand-fold, yes, many thousand-fold! Here on earth our hearts are like the isle of Patmos, which brings forth but little fruit; but when they shall by death be transplanted to heaven, they shall be like the tree in Alcinous's garden, which had always blossoms, buds, and ripe fruits, one under another.

In the island of St. Thomas, on the back side of Africa, in the midst of it is a hill, and over that a continual cloud, wherewith the whole island is watered and made fruitful. Such a cloud will Jesus Christ be to all those precious souls that shall be transplanted from earth to heaven.

Oh! why, then, should believers be unwilling to die, seeing that their dying day is but a transplanting day of their souls from earth to heaven—<sup>^</sup>from a wilderness to a paradise? But in the

As a believer's dying day is the day of his transplantation, so his dying day is the day of his CORONATION. Here on earth believers are kings elected—<sup>^</sup>but when they die, they are kings crowned; now they have a crown in reversion—<sup>^</sup>but then they have a crown in possession; now they have a crown in hope—<sup>^</sup>but then they shall have a crown in hand, James 1:12, Rev. 2:10. Death will at last bring the soul—<sup>^</sup>to a crown without thorns, to a crown without mixture, to a righteous crown, to a glorious crown, to an everlasting crown. Though a crown be the top of royalty, and though beyond it the thoughts and wishes of mortal men extend not—<sup>^</sup>yet most may say of their earthly crowns as that king said of his: O crown! more noble than happy! But death will set such a crown upon a believer's head as shall always flourish, and as shall make him happy to all eternity. Here on earth the believer, as his Savior before him, is crowned with thorns—<sup>^</sup>but death will turn that crown of thorns into a crown of pure gold! Psalm 132:18, Psalm 21:3.

Upon a triumph, the Emperor Severus' soldiers, for the greater pomp, were to put crowns on their heads—<sup>^</sup>but there was one Christian among them who wore this crown on his arm; and it being demanded why he did so, he answered, it does not befit a Christian to wear his crown in this life. The truth is, a Christian's crown never sits so fast, nor never so well benefits him, as when it is put on by the hand of death. Here on earth most princes' crowns are the fruits of unrighteousness—<sup>^</sup>but death will at last put upon the believer a crown of righteousness, or a righteous crown, 2 Tim. 4:7-8; and so it is called, not only because it is purchased by the righteousness of Christ—<sup>^</sup>but also to difference it from those unrighteous crowns, or crowns of unrighteousness, which the princes of this world put upon their own heads. Earthly crowns are corruptible—<sup>^</sup>but death will put on the heads of believers, an incorruptible crown, 1 Cor. 9:25.

Worldly crowns are fading and withering. Though king William the Conqueror was crowned three times every year during his reign—<sup>^</sup>at three different places, namely, Gloucester, Winchester, and Westminster—<sup>^</sup>yet how soon did his crown fade and wither? But death will put such a crown upon the believer's head as shall never fade nor wither, 1 Pet. 5:4.

Worldly crowns are tottering and shaking; and all their power and policy cannot make them sit fast on both sides. But death will put upon the heads of believers—<sup>^</sup>an immortal crown, an unmoveable crown, an everlasting crown, an eternal crown, a crown that none can shake, that none can take, that none can conquer or overcome! 2 Cor. 4:14-18, Rev. 2:10.

Oh, why then should Christians be afraid to die, or unwilling to die, seeing that their dying day is but their coronation day? Who would be unwilling to ride to a crown through a dirty lane or a rainy day? But,

A gracious soul shall never die until his work is finished, and he prepared to die. And why then should he be unwilling to die when his work is done, and he prepared to go home? When God has no more work for you to do in this world, why then should you be unwilling to die, to go home? Until your work which God has planned out for you in this world is finished, no power nor policy shall ever be able to cut off the thread of your lives; in despite of all the world, and all the powers of hell, you shall do that work, be it more or less, which God has appointed you to do in this world. The life of Christ was very often in danger, both among pretended friends and professed foes—but yet he still escapes all the snares which they had laid for him, and all the pits which they have dug for him, and that upon this very ground—that his time was not yet come, his hour was not yet come. John 7:30, "Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come." John 8:20, "But he was not arrested, because his time had not yet come."

God often bridles wicked men's malice and fury invisibly. God can and will secure his people from the rage and malice of their enemies by a secret and invisible hand of providence, until they have finished the work that he has set them about in this world. David was surrounded with enemies on all hands—but yet, in spite of them all, he keeps up until his work was done: Acts 13:36, "David, after serving his own generation in God's plan, fell asleep." Though many thrust sore at him—yet he did not fall asleep, he did not die until he had served his generation.

Bonds and afflictions waited on Paul in every city, Acts 20:23; so in that 2 Cor. 11:23-28, "I have been put in jail more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes (the Lord commanded that the number of strokes should not exceed forty, Deut. 25:3, and therefore the Jews, that they might not transgress that law, gave one less). Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled many weary miles. I have faced danger from flooded rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the stormy seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be Christians but are not. I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food. Often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm." Acts 16:23, 14:17. And yet notwithstanding all these hazards, hardships, dangers, deaths—Paul lives, and bravely bears up until his work was done, his course finished: 2 Tim. 4:7-8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

And so in Rev. 11:7—the beast which ascended out of the bottomless pit, and made war against the two witnesses, could not overcome them, nor kill them—until they had finished their testimony. Christians shall live to finish their testimony, and to do all that work that God has cut out for them to do, in spite of all the beasts in the world, in spite of hell or anti-christ!

It was so with Ambrose; a certain witch sent her minions to kill him—but they returned answer, that God had hedged him in, as he did Job, so that they could not touch him. Another came with a sword to his bedside to have killed him; but he could not stir his hand, until repenting, he was by the prayer of Ambrose restored to the use of his hands again. No means, no attempts, could cut him off until his work was done.

So for Luther, a poor friar, to stand so stoutly against the pope—this was a great miracle; but that he should prevail against the pope as he did, this was a greater; and that after all he should die in his bed, notwithstanding all the enemies he had, and the many designs they had to have destroyed him, this was the greatest of all; and yet for all that the pope or the devil his father could do, Luther; when he had finished his testimony, dies in his bed. Oh! why then should any Christian be unwilling to die, seeing he shall not die until his work is done, until his testimony be finished?

And as a believer shall not die until his work be done—so he shall not die until he be prepared to die. A believer is always habitually prepared to die; ay, even then when he is not actually prepared; yet then he is habitually prepared to die, for he has not his ark to build, nor his lamp to trim, nor his oil to buy, nor his pardon to seal, nor his peace to make, nor his graces to get, nor his interest in Christ to seek, nor divine favor to secure, nor a righteousness to look after, etc. That promise is full of honey and sweetness that you have in Job 5:26, "You will live to a good old age. You will not be harvested until the proper time!" The farmer does not bring his corn into his barn until it is fully ripe, no more will God take his children out of this world until they are fit for another world; he will not transplant them from earth until they are fit, until they are prepared for heaven.

It is with Christians as it is with the fruits of the earth—some are ripe sooner, some later. But God will gather none until they are ripe for glory. Some souls, like some fruits, are ripe early; other Christians, like other fruit, are a longer time ripening; and so God gathers his fruit in as they ripen, some sooner, some later—but none until they are in a measure ripe for heaven. And why, then, should Christians be unwilling to die, seeing they shall not die until they are prepared to die?

e? I do not say they shall not die until they think they are fit to die, or until they say they are prepared to die; for they may be graciously prepared and sweetly fitted to die, and yet may judge otherwise, by reason of Satan's sleights, or some spiritual distemper that may hang upon them, or from a natural fear of death, and some great unwillingness to die; but they shall not die until they are either actually or habitually prepared to die, until they are ripe for glory; and therefore be not, o h be not, Christians, unwilling to die. But,

When a righteous mans dies, he shall leave a sweet savor behind him, his name shall live when he is dead. Heb. 11. Are not the names of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and other saints, a sweet savor to this very day? We know there is no sweet savor compared to that which they have left behind them: Psalm 112:6, "The righteous shall be had in an everlasting remembrance." Proverbs 10:7, "The memory of the just is blessed:" the Septuagint thus translates it, "The memory of the just is with praises." Many are the praises which endure on the name of the just when their bodies are in the dust; no scent so sweet as that which the just man leaves behind him: Eccles. 7:1, "A good name is better than precious ointment." He does not say a great name, a name arising from outward greatness—but a good name, a name arising from inward goodness, and manifested by outward holiness; that is the name which is better than precious ointment. Ointment only reaches the nostrils—but a good name reaches to the cheering and the warming of the heart.

The Chaldee reads this verse thus: better is the good name which the just shall obtain in this world, than the ointment of anointing which was poured upon the heads of the kings and priests. Though a believer may not leave great sums of money behind him—but yet he shall leave a good name behind him, which answers to all, nay, which outweighs all the riches, gallantry, and glory of this world! The heathen Plautus hit it right who said, If I may but keep a good name, I have wealth enough. It is a greater mercy to leave a good name behind us than to leave the riches of a kingdom, yes, of a world, behind us. But,

Death is nothing but the believer's entrance into GLORY! Death is the gate of life, it is the gate of paradise; it is the midwife to bring eternity to birth. When Jacob saw the chariots which were to bring him to Joseph, his spirit revived, Gen. 45:27. Ah, Christian! death is that chariot that will bring you not only to a sight of Jacob and Joseph—but also to a blessed sight of God, Christ, angels and the spirits of just men made perfect! Heb. 12:23-24.

Here on earth we meet with many inlets to sin, to sorrow, to affliction, to temptation; but death, of all inlets, is the most happy inlet; it lets the soul into a full fruition of God, to the perfection of grace, and to the heights of glory! Why, then, should a gracious soul be unwilling to die? But I must hasten to a close.

Was Jesus Christ so willing to leave heaven, his Father's bosom, his crown, his dignity, his glory, his royal attendance—but to come into this world to suffer the saddest and the heaviest things that ever were thought of, that ever were heard of, for your sins, for your sake? And will you be unwilling to die, and to go to him who has suffered so much, who has paid so much, who has prepared so much, for you? One of the fathers longed to die—that he might see that head that was crowned with thorns. Ah, Christian, Christian! why do you not rather reason thus with your own soul: Did Christ die for me, that I might live with him? I will not therefore desire to live long from him. All men go willingly to see him whom they love, and shall I be unwilling to die, that I may see him whom my soul loves? Oh, I will not! Oh, I dare not! Oh, I may not! Others venture through many dangers and many deaths to see their friends and relations. And why then should not you, O Christian! be willing to venture through death to the Lord of life, to him who is your crown, your comfort, your head, your husband, your heaven, your all? etc. But, in the last place,

Consider, O believer! that you always stand before God in the righteousness of Jesus Christ—who is called the Lord of our righteousness, and who is made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, Jer. 23:6; Cor. 1:30. While you live you stand before God, not in the righteousness of your duties, nor in your gracious dispositions, which are but weak and imperfect—but in the pure, perfect, matchless, and spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ. And when you die you appear before God in the same glorious righteousness, so that you may appear before God's unspotted justice and holiness with the greatest boldness and comfort that is imaginable, upon the account of that righteousness with which you are clothed!

Psalm 45:13, "The king's daughter is all glorious within" (there is her inward glory; grace makes the soul glorious within); "her clothing is of wrought gold." Some read it enameled with gold; such as precious stones were set in, which were exceeding splendid and glorious, and which shadowed forth the glorious righteousness of our Lord Jesus, Exod. 28:11, 14; 39:1-5, etc. This clothing of wrought gold is the glorious righteousness of our Lord Jesus. Now, in life and in death, the believer stands before God in the glorious golden robes of Christ's righteousness; and hence it is that believers are said to be all beautiful, and to be without spot or wrinkle, and to be complete in Christ, and to be without fault before the throne of God; And why then should a believer be unwilling to die and appear before God? By reason of this clothing of wrought

ught gold, you stand spotless, blameless, and faultless before God! This golden clothing, this glorious righteousness of Christ, is as truly and really the believer's, and as fully and completely the believer's, as if it were his very own. Ah! no clothing to this.

The costly cloak of Alcisthenes, which Dionysius sold to the Carthaginians for a great sum, was indeed a mean and beggarly rag, compared to this embroidered mantle which Christ puts upon all believers. And therefore a Christian, both living and dying, should say with the psalmist, "I will make mention of your righteousness, of your righteousness alone," Psalm 71:15-16, 19. Let them be afraid to die, let them be unwilling to die—who must appear before God in their sins, and in their own righteousness, which at best is but as filthy rags, Isaiah 64:6. But as for you, O Christian, who shall always appear before God in clothing of wrought gold—be not afraid of death, be not unwilling to die—but rather desire it, rather long for it! 1 Cor. 15:55-57, because you are clothed with such righteousness as will bear you up sweetly in it, as will carry you bravely through it, and as will make you triumph over it.

Christ's righteousness is a Christian's white raiment, in which he stands pure before God, Rev. 3:18, and Rev. 19:7-8, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the linen is the righteousness of saints." By the fine, clean, white linen which is here called the righteousness, or, as the Greek has it, the righteousnesses of saints; most understand the glorious righteousness of Christ. Righteousness is an Hebraism, noting that most perfect absolute righteousness which we have in Christ. White is a natural color, it is a color of purity, ornament, and honor. It was the clothing in times past, of nobles.

Now in this pure, clean, white linen all the saints are clothed, and so presented to God by Jesus Christ; and why then should they be unwilling to die? Here is not a speck, not a spot, to be found upon this white linen, which is the righteousnesses of saints, which should make saints rather to pursue after death, than to fly from it, or to be unwilling to welcome it when it comes.

I am not ignorant that this unwillingness to die most usually springs from those low and dark apprehensions men have of God, and from weakness of faith, and from coldness of love, and from laying the creatures too near our hearts, and from our little communion with God, and our rare meditations on paradise, and from our not treasuring up a stock of promises, and a stock of experiences, etc. I have also considered what a dishonor to God, a reproach to Christ, a grief to the Spirit, a scandal to religion, a blot to profession, a mischief to sinners, and a wrong to saints—it is, for Christians to be unwilling to die, or to be afraid of death, which has occasioned me to muster up these twenty considerations to encourage you to be willing to die; and if these will not prevail with you, I profess I do not know what will.

OBJECTION. I would be willing to die, if I had but assurance: but that is the jewel I lack; and therefore I am unwilling to die.

(1.) First, I answer, It may be you have assurance, though not such a measure of assurance, such a full assurance, as you desire. A perfect, complete, absolute, and full assurance is very desirable on earth—but I think few attain to it until they come to heaven. This sparkling diamond, full assurance, God hangs in few saints' bosoms until they come to glory. But,

(2.) Secondly, I answer, The least grace, if true, is sufficient to salvation, Mat. 5:3, 10; and therefore the sense of the least grace, or of the least measure of grace, should be sufficient to assurance of salvation. But,

(3.) Thirdly, The time of death is one of the most usual seasons wherein God gives his children the sweetest and fullest assurance of his love, of their interest in him, and of their right to glory. When there was but a step, a stride, between Stephen and death—then he saw heaven open, and Christ standing at the right hand of his Father, Acts 7:55-60.

Mr. Glover, though he had been long under clouds and much darkness—yet when he came near the fire, he cried out to his friend, He is come, He is come! meaning the Lord, in the sweet and glorious discoveries of his love and favor to him; and so he died, with a heart full of joy and assurance.

I could here give you diverse examples, of a later date, of many precious Christians who have lived close with God many years, and have been much in seeking of assurance, and the Lord has held them off until a few years before their death—and then he has filled their souls so full of the sense of his love, and the assurance of their everlasting welfare, that they have died under the power of their joys.



Assurance is a free gift of God, and God loves to give his gifts to his children when they may most cheer them, and be of greatest use and service to them; and when is that—<sup>^</sup>but at the day of death? And therefore Christians should not be unwilling to die for lack of assurance, because that is a special season wherein God usually gives assurance to his children. But,

(4.) Fourthly and lastly, You may die and go to heaven without assurance. This truth, with several others of the like import, that may further satisfy such as are unwilling to die, I have made good in that treatise of mine called "Heaven on Earth," and to that I refer the reader for further satisfaction, if what is said does not satisfy.

The next inference, then, that I shall make, and so hasten to a close, is this: If the best things are reserved for believers—<sup>^</sup>then let not Christians mourn immoderately. 1 Thes. 4:13-14. Oh! be not over-much afflicted and grieved for the death of husband, wife, child, sister, friend, who dies in the Lord; for they are but gone to take possession of those great and glorious things which are reserved in heaven for them. This deceased saint is now gone to her home, to her heaven, to her God who has loved her, to her Christ who has died for her, and to her crown which was prepared for her. Abraham mourned moderately for his dear deceased Sarah, Gen. 23:2; and that not because she was old and over-worn—<sup>^</sup>but because death to her was but an inlet into glory! Death did but bring her to a happy fruition of all those glorious things which God has laid up for those who love him.

Death, which seems to dispossess a Christian of all, puts him into a possession of all; of all joys, of all comforts, of all delights, of all contentments, of all happiness, of all blessedness! Why then should our sorrow, our tears overflow the banks of moderation? Sorrow is good for nothing but for sin. Now that the child is dead, therefore should I fast and weep? said David. Grief preceding evil, if it be used for a remedy, cannot be too much; but that which follows an evil past, cannot be too little.

When Ezekiel lost his wife, the delight of his eyes, he must not weep, Ezek. 24:15-17. When Mary the mother of Jesus stood by the cross of her only dear Son, she wept not, as Ambrose says, John 19:25-27. We may say of our deceased friend, as the Jews of their father Jacob, he is not dead; or as our Savior of Lazarus, "He is not dead—<sup>^</sup>but sleeps," John 11:11; and the maid, "Why trouble yourselves? they are not dead—<sup>^</sup>but sleep." To die, in the prophet Isaiah's phrase, is but to lie down in our beds, Isaiah 43:17; Isaiah 57:1-2. So Asa the king's coffin is called a bed, 2 Chron. 16:14. "And when your days shall be fulfilled," says Nathan to David, "and you shall sleep with your fathers;" or, as the original has it, "and you shall lie down with your fathers," 2 Sam. 7:12.

Death is nothing but a sleeping with our fathers, or a lying down in the bed with our fathers and friends, who have lain down before us. And, therefore, when a friend, a wife, a child dies, and leaves this world, we are to bid them but good night, as the primitive Christians used to do, in sure and certain hope to meet them in the morning of the resurrection.

The ancients were accustomed to call the days of their death natalia, not dying days but birth-days. It has been the custom, says Haymo, when a child of God departed this life, to call it not the day of his death—<sup>^</sup>but the day of his nativity. The Jews to this day stick not to call their graves—<sup>^</sup>the houses or places of the living.

The Jews' ancient custom was, as they went with the corpse to the grave, for everyone to pluck up the grass—<sup>^</sup>as if to say that they were not sorry for the death of their friends and relations, as men without hope—<sup>^</sup>for they, like the grass, were but cropped off, and would spring up again in due season. Ah, friends! if you will needs mourn, then mourn for yourselves, mourn for your sins, mourn for the barrenness and baseness of your own hearts; but do not mourn, at least excessively, for the death of any Christian friend or relation, seeing that death gives them a quiet and full possession of all that glory and happiness which is reserved in heaven for them!

The next use is cause of comfort and consolation to all the people of God. If it be so that the best things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven—<sup>^</sup>then this may serve to comfort the people of God, and that,

(1.) First, against their poor, low, and base condition in this world. Ah! poor Christians, what though you have little in hand—<sup>^</sup>yet you have much in hope; though you have little in possession—<sup>^</sup>yet you have much in reversion. He who has but little in present possession—<sup>^</sup>yet if he has a fair estate in reversion, he comforts himself, and solaces himself in the thoughts of it—<sup>^</sup>that there will come a day when he shall live like a king, when he shall live bravely and sweetly; and this makes him sing care and sorrow away. Why Christians, this is your actual condition! You have a fine, a glorious estate in reversion, though you have but little in possession; and therefore bear up bravely and live comfortably, James 2:5; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Psalm 16:6.

Christ, who was the heir of all—yet he lived poor and died poor, Mat. 8:20. As he was born in another man's house, so he was buried in another man's tomb. When Christ died he made no will; he had no fine lands; only his coat was left, and that the soldiers parted among them. If your outward condition is conformable to his, there is no reason why you should be discouraged, for you have a rich and royal revenue that will shortly come into your hand, and then you shall never again know poverty or distress. And for your comfort, know, that though men despise you for your poverty—yet the Lord does highly prize you. It was a good saying of Basil, God pleases himself, beholding a hidden pearl in a despised and disrespected body.

The truth is, Christians, if there were any real happiness in the things of this life, you would have them—but it is not in all the wealth and pomp of this world—to make up a happiness to you. Therefore, as the enjoyment of them should not swell the rich, so the lack of them should not trouble the poor. The angels and saints departed in heaven are happy, and yet they have neither silver nor gold; they are blessed and yet they have none of the mirthful things of this life, they have none of the gallantry and pomp of this world. You have now your worst while on earth—your best days are to come! It will not be long before you shall have your portion in hand; therefore live sweetly and walk comfortably up and down this world. But,

(2.) Secondly, If the best things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven, then this may serve to comfort them against all outward abasements from the malignant world. What though you are counted as the scum, the dirt, the filth, the scraping, the offscouring of the world—by men who know not, who see not, who believe not what great and glorious things are reserved in heaven for you? Yet at last you shall be advanced to that dignity, and be made partakers of that felicity and glory, which shall work amazement and astonishment in those that now despise you and vilify you!

Those that now count you their troublers, shall be troubled with a witness, when they shall see you with crowns upon your heads and the royal robes of glory upon your backs, and two-edged swords in your hands, to execute the vengeance written, Psalm 149:4-9. Men who know their future greatness, are not troubled at reproaches; they think themselves above reproaches; they can divinely scorn scorns and despise contempts. Ah, Christians! how can you seriously consider of your future greatness, happiness, and glory—and not bear up sweetly and comfortably against all the contempt that you may meet with in this world?

And thus I have done with this subject, which of one sermon is multiplied into several, by a good hand of heaven upon me. I shall follow this poor piece with my weak prayers, that it may be a mercy to hearers, readers, and writer.

**Re: Twenty motives for Christians to be willing to die - Brooks - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2007/9/22 20:34**

Quote:

-----Ah, Christians, Christians! how justly may that father be angry with his child who is unwilling to come home;-----

I feel Thomas Brook writings is of spiritual quality that is invaluable in our modern day mass amounts of nominal preaching and writing.

**Re: Twenty motives for Christians to be willing to die - Brooks - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/9/24 14:03**

Quote:

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hmmhmm wrote:

Ah, Christians! death will cure you of all your infirmities, of all your distempers; and why, then, should you be unwilling to die? Maecenas, the heathen, said that he had rather live with many diseases than die; but I hope better things of you, for whom Christ has died.

And as death will cure all your bodily diseases, so it will cure all your soul-distempers also! Death is not the death of the man—but the death of his sin! Sin was the midwife which brought death into the world—and death shall be the grave to bury sin.

What is death but the burial of vices?—Ambrose. Death shall do that for a Christian—which all his duties could never do—which all his graces could never do—which all his experiences could never do—which all ordinances could never do. It shall at once free him fully, perfectly, and perpetually from all sin—yes, from all possibility of ever sinning again!