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Death is the enemy but cannot beat life

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7:54 p.m. EDT, May 13, 2011

I have one of my favorite topics on my mind today, and also one of my least favorite: life and death. They are opposites and yet they are bound together.

Death is probably no one's favorite subject. It is our enemy, "the last enemy to be destroyed," says the Bible (1 Corinthians 15:26).

I realize there are some who have been much too friendly with death. One of them, **Osama bin Laden**, has recently had opportunity to make his own far more intimate acquaintance with it. (I suspect death will prove to be his own worst personal enemy.)

His demise follows an achingly large number of other, far more tragic deaths. Almost 15,000 died (over 10,000 are still missing) as a result of **Japan's earthquake** and tsunami in March. Closer to home, hundreds recently died in tornadoes in **Alabama** — just nine days after 47 others, three of them in Gloucester, also lost their lives to tornadoes.

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Even closer to home for me and my family, my wife's mother passed away on April 20. You can see why death is on my mind.

Yet I cannot separate it from thoughts of life. My mother-in-law's funeral was a double celebration of life: we honored her own life, and since it was the day before **Easter**, we celebrated the great

news of the resurrection a day early. We're confident she was celebrating with us.

How do I know this? Above all, it's because of Jesus Christ's resurrection. I don't have space here to explain the many reasons I am so convinced of that reality. I discuss it frequently with atheists and skeptics, and the conversations run deep and long. Suffice it to say that from the standpoint of **documentary** and archaeological evidence, the resurrection is one of the best-supported facts of history.

Some people may have biases that keep them from considering the possibility of such a miracle. Some people have had unpleasant experiences with Christianity. I acknowledge these things; but they are not evidence.

There's another reason I'm sure death is not final: I have seen the power of life. I don't think death has what it takes to stop it cold. I can't imagine that something as puny as death could overcome the strength my mother-in-law (or my own mother before her) took with her into that decisive last battle.

But then what? Shakespeare's Hamlet wondered (haven't we all?) about this "undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns," asking,

"To die, to sleep--

To sleep--perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub,

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil..."

No one has returned to tell us what death is like. So says Hamlet—but he's wrong. Jesus Christ is the great exception. He tells us (John 5:28-29):

"An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."

Doing good, he says elsewhere (John 6:29), begins with believing on him "whom God has sent." The more familiar John 3:16 also tells us that eternal life is for those who believe in him.

Not every reader will agree with or even appreciate everything I've said here. Few, however, will dispute that death is the supreme enemy. It will be defeated, I am convinced, by the power of the one who has already stared

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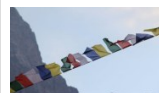
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Tom Gilson is the director of strategic processes for Campus Crusade for Christ. He can be contacted through his weblog at <http://www.thinkingchristian.net>.

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