

## Brain Death Continued

- Children in the womb with genetic abnormalities, or severely handicapped infants, or desperately disabled adults, incompetent elderly period (Alzheimer's), should they fail to meet the criteria in the fourth definition, they would no longer be considered as living persons.
  - Unconscionable treatment of these supposed non-persons would be the tragic result of this view.
- The biblical theology of the body will repudiate any definition of personhood that is based on the quality of life or social profitability criteria.
  - It will insist on a definition that considers all people to be persons until a point of irreversible absolute loss of respiratory, circulatory, and whole brain activity is reached.



## The Ways We Die

- The various ways in which people die include the following (the diseases are generally not isolated causes but are accompanied by pneumonia, infection, kidney and/or liver failure, septicemia, etc.):
  - Ischemic heart disease, cancer, stroke, respiratory failure, Alzheimer's disease, hemorrhage, murder, death by accident (especially a vehicular incident in which alcohol is involved), suicide, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS, often in association with Kaposi's sarcoma), even old age (though not recognized as an official "category" of death by the biomedical institution, the "wearing out" of the body brings about death) (from Sherwin Nuland, *How We Die*).
- These are the ways in which we die.
- There really aren't that many when you think about it.



## The Art of Dying

- This is the medieval *ars moriendi* (art of dying).
- In the face of bubonic plague and massive starvation via repeated famine due to crop failure, Europeans portrayed the inevitability and immanency of death, and how to deal with this reality in paintings, wood carvings and so forth.
  - There is one piece of art that shows demons shoving all his sins in his face, but he is consoled by a vision of Christ on the cross, the virgin Mary, Peter, and angel. Those were the hopes of his day.
  - After the vision, then the demons attacked again showing after his death, his property was going to be stolen by his heirs and friends. The man as result of this banishes his friends and relatives from his presence and denies them his inheritance.
  - Then there is a final temptation where the demons offer the dying man great rewards if he will follow them.
  - In the end, he resists the temptation, and his soul is conducted to heaven by the angels, and the demons then agonize over the loss of this man.



## The Art of Dying

- The art of dying emphasized we should maintain our hope on Christ and the future blessedness He offers, by fighting against horrible temptations from demonic forces.
- The *danc morcada* or dance of death was another common theme of medieval life.
  - Death was depicted as a skeleton leading its victims away to their doom.
  - The victims were hierarchically arranged in a progression: the rulers were at the head of the line along with a church leader, next were wealthy merchants and fat monks, concluding with peasants and the poverty stricken.
  - An hour glass with sands of time slipping away would appear in the corner of the picture.
  - The message was clear. Death comes to all people, and every person, regardless of their position in society. It hurriedly approaches. Resignation to this fact colored life.



## The Art of Dying

- Is this the way we are supposed to face death, our own and others? If not, then would be a biblical way to face death? What would be a biblical art of dying?
- To answer this, we need a biblical theology of dying.
- First, several extremes must be avoided.
- Avoid the extreme of downplaying the tragedy, horror, and evil of death.
  - Some sincere Christians think weeping and lamenting and exhibition of emotion is a demonstration of a lack of faith since this person is better off now in the presence of Christ.
  - One thing to be commended in this attitude is faith does allow us to face death.
  - But grief over the loss of loved ones is not tantamount to a lack of faith. In fact it is right and proper and necessary.
  - Someone who has contributed to our life and world has been taken away, and that void will never be filled during our earthly existence.
  - The believers in Jerusalem lamented loudly over the death of Stephen. The elders of Ephesus wept bitterly over the idea of not seeing Paul ever again.
  - Even the anger over death is a natural and proper response to the unnaturalness of death. Death is an intruder and enemy. Jesus lamented the death of Lazarus. He was inwardly outraged by the ugly specter of death and the broken heartedness it leaves in its ruinous path.

## The Art of Dying

- Extremes to Avoid (cont.)
- Avoiding the extreme of contemplating death with eagerness and anticipation
  - If death is gain, some might think we need to long for it. It is not for death itself we should long, but the next step that follows death.
- So in light of that, the Bible has us affirm the following:
- Death is the gateway between our current existence and an eternal existence of either blessedness in the Lord's presence (for believers) or of misery and torment away from that blessed presence (unbelievers).
- This gateway of death is the result of sin and not part and parcel of the created human order.
  - Continued on the next slide.



## The Art of Dying

- Death is not natural, but it was introduced into the human realm as a punishment for sin.
- If we speculate about what things would be like had our original parents not sinned, it seems like that existence bolstered and strengthened by a consistent obedience to the Lord would have resulted in eternal life as they would have partaken in the tree of life and live in the blessed presence of God forever.
  - What role, then, would have been served by death as a gateway into that which they already enjoyed?
  - So obviously, there would be no purpose of death. Death is not natural. It comes as a result of sin.
- But now it is a gateway to this for believers. Since all people are involved in sin, all people die. But death is not original to God's creation.
- Christians view their own death with joy (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil 1:20-23) and not with fear (Heb. 2:15; Rom. 8:38-39)



## The Art of Dying

- We view it with joy as the texts below show. Not even death can separate us from God's love. Satan is a defeated enemy rendered powerless. We cannot fall into his clutches forever. We are no longer slaves to the fear of death. So we view our own death with joy, not fear.
  - 2 Cor 5:8 – In fact, we are confident, and we would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.
  - Phil 1: 21– For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.



# The Art of Dying

- Christians view the death of other Christians with sadness and express sorrow, but such grief is mitigated by the knowledge that they are now with Christ in heaven.
  - It is not wrong for Christians to express sorrow. It is not a lack of faith to mourn, cry, and lament. But it is not like the grief for unbelievers that die.
- Christians view the death of non-believers with great sorrow that is not intermingled with joy, yet with hope that impending death prompted serious reflection leading to repentance (avoid giving false assurance of salvation, however).
  - Paul wrote concerning his non-believing countrymen in Romans 9. He had great sorrow and unceasing sadness for them. Survivors of dead people will come to you, Christians, and want you to say their loved one is in heaven.
  - We should eulogize those who die (speak well and recount great characteristics and the friendship and so forth – they are made in the image of God), but we must not give false assurance.

