

Your Date With Death

You have a date with Death! It is an appointment you cannot escape. Hebrews 9:27-28 reminds us of an inescapable date with death. *“And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”*

Three great facts stand out in these verses: (1) You must die. (2) Are you prepared to die? (3) If not, you must prepare to die.

1. YOU MUST DIE!

Early one morning a man staggered into a downtown hotel room after a wild night of licentiousness and sin. His conscience bothered him. It was Sunday morning, and he was steeped in alcohol. He remembered his godly mother, his Sunday school days, and his church. He picked up a Bible lying on the table. The Book fell open at the fifth chapter of Genesis, and he began to read:

“And Adam lived...and he died.”

“And Seth lived...and he died”

“And Enos lived...and he died.”

“And Cainan lived...and he died”

“And Mahalaleel lived...and he died.” ...

The constant, solemn repetition of the words, *“and he died”* pierced the brain befogged with liquor. The man broke into tears, knelt beside his bed and asked God to forgive his sins.

Everyone must die. The rich, the poor, the educated, the ignorant – all must die! Men have sought to beautify death. They seek to make corpses look as real as life. Cemeteries are no longer graveyards, they are called *“Gardens of memories,”* or some other sweet sounding name.

But death is still cold, relentless and terrifying. The words of the prophet to King Hezekiah could well form the warning of God to every sinner, *“Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live”* (Isaiah 38:1).

James tells us that *“when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”* (James 1:15).

The certain end of sin is death! After the glitter, the glamour and the gaiety comes the sudden stillness of death; after the wild search for pleasure, the unexpected visit of the Grim Reaper; after the fun and frolic, the cold grave.

Man’s experience tells him that he must die. For centuries he has searched in vain for ways to escape death.

In the early days of America the Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon traversed the southeastern part of our country searching for the fountain of youth. Today there is a cave in St. Augustine, Florida where they pass out water in paper cups – water from Ponce de Leon’s Fountain of Youth.

But no one who drinks the water remains youthful. There is only one fountain of Youth, and that is God's own Son, for "*he that hath the Son hath life*" (1 John 5:12).

Every hearse says, "*You must die!*" Every graveyard cries, "*You must die!*" Every funeral procession says, "*You must die!*"

The uncertainty of life!

While the fact of death is very certain, the time and manner of death are uncertain.

James 4:14 declares, "*Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.*" You do not know whether you will be living tomorrow. No one can predict the events of tomorrow. The time and manner of death are uncertain. James tells us that life is fleeting, for the inspired apostle declares in this very same text that life is even a "*vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*"

Have you even seen this apparatus they have for blowing bubbles? You blow the bubbles and the wind carries them away. If you try to catch them, you scamper in pursuit after them but, just as your hands touches the bubble, it bursts. And so it goes, bubble after bubble. The bubbles are beautiful, but temporary, tantalizing but transitory. They are here, but gone before you can reach them!

So it is with your life. It is a bubble, a vapor. Like a wisp of cloud it vanishes away. You are dying as right now, as you listen to this message. Your body is aging. The years are flying. You will soon be in the grave. This should bring you face-to-face with a second great fact:

2. YOU ARE UNPREPAED TO DIE!

Unless one has Jesus Christ as his Savior, he is not prepared to die. Death is the most severe test of all religions, creeds and professions. Many who think their "*religion*" is adequate in this life find that it fails them in the chilly waters of death. Many who make a profession of Christianity find their profession is empty when they face the cold, damp hand of Death. Baptism, church membership and morality = are insufficient to comfort the soul when it faces eternity. Only Christ can give assurance and peace in that hour.

You have unforgiven sins. The last part of Hebrews 9:27 reminds us that after death is judgment. But no judgment would be necessary if it were not for sin.

You are not prepared to die if you have never asked Christ to forgive your sins, never asked Him to save you. Every unforgiven sin will stalk you like a bloodhound. It will follow you down the corridors of time and eternity. It will mock you at the judgment bar. It will haunt you in the lake of fire.

If you are without Christ, what about your youthful sins? Those wild oats you sowed in your younger days will pursue you relentlessly to the grave and into eternity

One of Job's miserable comforters uttered an awesome truth. He is speaking of the wicked, when he said, "*His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust*" (Job 20:11).

Do you remember all the sins of your youth? Perhaps not, but God does. "Oh," you say, "*those were just the natural mistakes of immaturity.*" God says they are sins, and they are still unforgiven. They are skeletons in the closets of your past. Maybe no one knows about them, but God does. Those sins will "*lie down with you in the grave.*" Death will not rid you of them!

Young people sometimes think that they will live fast and wild and loose and it will all be forgotten later on in life. But it will not! If you have not asked Christ for forgiveness and cleansing, you will be haunted by them in your memory and met at the judgment by those sins you are committing now.

What about the unforgiven sins of your lips? Jesus said in Matthew 12:36, "*every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*" Jesus said that we must give account for every idle word! Every curse word, every lie, every dirty tale, every smutty joke, every blasphemy – God had forgotten none of them = and, unless we confess and ask for God's forgiveness, God will judge them in eternity.

Think of the unforgiven sins of your mind. In the days of Noah, God saw that "*the wickedness of man was great in the earth. And that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Genesis 6:5) As a result, God sent the flood to destroy mankind.

Almighty God read the very thoughts of man. He does the same today. Those evil thoughts must be forgiven if you would enter Heaven.

A man was telling how his little girl received for Christmas a toy doctor's set, including a stethoscope. Her daddy, to amuse her, pretended that the stethoscope was a mind-reading device. He placed it on her head and proceeded, in his make believe game to "*read her mind.*" He had heard her begging her mother earlier for some candy, so it took a wild guess and said, "*I know what you are thinking. You want some of the Christmas candy that on the top shelf in the pantry.*"

The little girl looked wide-eyed in amazement, stood speechless for a moment and then snatched the stethoscope from her father, and ran and hid it. In fact, she hid it so well; her father said he was never able to find it. She suspected that this device would enable Daddy to read her mind, and this she definitely did not want!

We do not relish the contents of our mind being known by others, but God knows our inmost thoughts. Those thoughts which are evil must be forgiven, or someday they will mock us in the presence of a holy God.

You may have secret sins, which need to be forgiven before you are prepared to die. Romans 2:16 tells us that there is coming a day when, "*God shall judge the secrets of men.*" Those sins you thought were long since buried and forgotten will rise before you – sins that your husband or wife knew nothing about, sins committed under the cover of darkness – secret sins. God will bring them all to light and judge every one of them.

During World War II a certain industrial plant was losing large amounts of tools. They suspected that workmen were slipping them out in their clothing and lunch boxes.

Accordingly, a new requirement was instituted. Everyone, upon leaving work, must pass through a machine that detected the presence of metal.

The losses dwindled to nothing! Men could not escape the piercing rays, which discovered every hidden thing.

So it will be when sinners face a holy God. Hebrews 4:13 say, “*All thing are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*”

You will face a judgment for which you are not prepared. The last part of our text, in Hebrews 9:27, is more startling than the first. It would be hard enough to face the terrors of death. If death were annihilation, much of its fear would be lost. But every sinner has an innate consciousness of the truth of Hebrews 9:27, “*As it is appointed men once to die, but, after this the judgment.*” Sober words are these – “*after this!*” Death does not end it all. Death is only the butler that leads us into the presence of God. After death we must meet our Creator.

All unforgiven sins will be reviewed in God’s presence at the judgment. Paul says in 1 Timothy 5:24, “*Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men they follow after.*” What does that mean? It means that some men’s sins are plain and obvious, easily detected and known by almost everyone. It does not take some secret search, or some special discerning, to find them out. But there are other men who appear outwardly to be good, moral, citizens but in the light of the judgment their wicked sins will appear.

Morality and church membership may cover the wickedness of their hearts now, but it will be plainly evident in the light of the judgment. There are the sins that “*follow after*” that is, they are not clearly revealed until judgment day.

The Apostle John, by inspiration of God, describes the Day of Judgment like this: “*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works*” (Revelation 20: 12).

Those books – what do they contain? Evidently they contain an infallible record of all the deeds of the unsaved who appear before the Great White Throne. God has not forgotten a single sin. Every one is written in the books. There will be no guesswork, no slip of memory. There will remain no hint of any excuse for the sinner. He cannot contradict the record of God. The sins are in the book. The sinner must face them.

You will face the Christ Jesus you rejected. It would be bad enough to be confronted with your sins at the judgment. But the very Judge whom you will face will be the same Jesus Christ whom you rejected on earth.

God offers salvation to you now, but it is only through Jesus Christ. John 1:12 says, “*But as many as received Him, [Jesus Christ] to them gave He [God, the Father] power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.*”

Jesus Christ is God's appointed Savior. That pierced Man – wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities He – and He alone – can save sinners.

Supposed you reject Him. Suppose you despise His offer of grace, His full pardon of sin. You will meet Him at the judgment! John 5:22 tells us that God, the Father, "*hath committed all judgment unto the Son.*" The Lord Jesus Christ will be the Judge of every sinner who rejected Him as their Savior. How will you face Him? What will you say? What excuse will you give for your indifference to His plan? None will do, for Romans 1:20 tells us that you will be "*without excuse.*" If you reject Jesus Christ as your Savior, you will be unprepared to die, because "*after death*" you will stand before the One whom you rejected.

You must face God's eternal wrath. Rejection of God's appointed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, insures the eternal wrath of God upon every human being.

John 3:36 teaches, "*He that believeth on the son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*"

This text teaches emphatically that God's wrath is now displayed by the eternal prison of fire, which the Bible calls "*hell.*" John 3:36 teaches that the wrath of God "*abideth*" on every Christ-rejector. The present tense of this verse indicates that over the head of every unsaved person there will hang the anger of God.

While God loves the sinner, His continual displeasure is revealed against his sin. Death will immediately bring that cloud of God's wrath bursting in all its fury upon the soul of the unsaved person.

3. YOU MUST PREPARE TO DIE

In light of these great Biblical facts, there is only one thing for you to do. You must make preparation for death. It is certain, = inevitable, an appointment you cannot escape. Christ alone can make you ready for death.

Death is imminent.

The first reason why you need to make preparation is that death is imminent. A graphic picture of this is found in the statement of David as recorded in 1 Samuel 20:3.

Let me set the stage of this text. David was being hunted by Saul. Like a wild animal, David is bent on saving his life. He flees, first to the forest, then to the plain, then to a mountain. He seeks to escape the cruel hand of the mad king of Israel. He never knew when some innocent-looking bush might be a hiding place for his dreaded enemy. He wondered if, any moment, from some dark cave, an arrow would fly, and end his life. He was in constant danger of his life, and so he stated to Jonathan, his friend, "*There is but a step between me and death.*"

Just a step to death, that's all it would be for David. One impulsive, over-hasty, undertaking into a forest glen, or a rocky crag and it just might bring the arrow, or spear, that would hurtle him into eternity. One step to death!

That's all it may be for you. You could be one step, one heartbeat, one breath away, from death. You stand on the very brink of eternity. If you reject Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have no Savior, no assurance, no hope. You are doomed – lost. You have no future, except the judgment of God. Every step you take away from Christ, is another step toward death. It may be your last. There may be only one more step between you and death. The step you are contemplating now, in rejecting Jesus Christ as your Savior, could possibly be your last step before your appointment with death. If you refuse Christ's offer of salvation now, it may be the last step you will ever take.

Maybe you are making plans for tomorrow. You are going to work on some plans that you have for the day. You are going to expand your business. Maybe you are planning on making some purchase of some kind. You are not expecting to die. But you may!

Jesus tells, in Luke 12:16-21, of a man who had plenty. He had a good business, a healthy income, a lovely family, a good education and many friends. He was well off. One day he went out to look over some farmland he owned. He saw that his storage bins were inadequate. His crops were so plentiful that he would need more space.

So he began to lay plans for the future. He said, *"I'll pull down my old barns, and build greater ones. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry!'"*

He was living for this life only, for security, for money, for pleasure, and for his business. He gave no thought to death, eternity or the judgment. He was like so many Americans today. Why should they think about such morbid subjects as death and judgment? They are having a good time and intend to continue. But *"good times"* may not continue. There was another voice that echoed to the soul of this well-to-do gentleman. It was the voice of God. He said, *"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."*

He gasps *"But, Lord, not so soon, I'm just a young man, on my way up in the world, = I'm not ready to die."* But he did die, that very night.

And you will die too! It could be, as God said to this man, *"this night."*

He was not ready to die, and, neither are you, if you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior. You need Christ as your Savior and you need Him now!

Death is final

The second reason for immediate preparation for death is the stubborn fact that death is final. There is no hope of salvation after death, despite the false teachings of some cults.

In Luke 16:22-23 the obituaries of two men are recorded. One was a saved man who went to Paradise. The other was an unsaved man who went to Hades. Both of them had to live somewhere after they died.

The unsaved man was tormented in the flames of Hades. He cried to the Abraham, across a great divide and asked to be relieved in his anguish. Abraham replied, *"Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed"* (Luke 16:26). The word *"fixed"* tells us that this gulf is insurmount-

able, unbridgeable, impassable. The state of a man after death is “*fixed*” He cannot change it. It is eternal. The preparation you make for the salvation of your soul must be made now! Christ will give you eternal life instead of eternal death. He will save you if you will trust Him.

Death is conquered

Our text, Hebrews 9:27, says, “*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*” If God’s Word had stopped with verse 27, there would have been no hope for the human race. The last word in verse 27 is “*judgment.*” The hope of salvation from judgment for any man is through Jesus Christ. Verse 28 states that, because it is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment, “*so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.*”

The reason men must fear death is because they are sinners. They fear to meet God in their sins. But Christ has borne our sins according to this marvelous verse. The sting of death is removed, because Christ died for all men.

1 Corinthians 15:56, reminds us that “*the sting of [resulting in] death is sin.*” But Jesus Christ took the sting for us, so that every believer may triumphantly ask, “*Oh, death, where is thy sting?*” (1 Corinthians 15:55). Christ is the “*death of death.*” He took our place, died for us and, because He did, death has lost its terror!

This is a great message of the Gospel, Christ suffered for us, the “*Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God*” (1 Peter 3:18). Death can lose its sting for you if you will take Christ as your Savior. He has faced God’s wrath for you. He has settled the account for you. He has finished the work of salvation for you. “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31).

Jesus Christ has satisfied all the demands of God. His death accomplished all that was necessary for the salvation of sinners. He is now able to offer you salvation as a free gift, for the “*gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 6:23). All you must now do is to accept that gift, and you will be free from the terrors of death and judgment

Years ago an old sea captain paced the cold streets of New York City one winter night. He was to leave the next day for another long voyage. He was a rough, wild seaman, a reprobate, scoffer and infidel. As he tramped along the street, he passed a brightly-lighted mission. Gospel singing floated through the doorway, but the old captain hurried past with only a sneer. As he did so, someone outside the mission handed him a little card, which he stuck in his shirt pocket and promptly forgot.

The next day, his ship pulled out of the harbor and headed for the high seas. Only a few days out, the old sea captain fell sick and was confined to his cabin. The doctor told him that perhaps this would be his last voyage. He was headed for eternity. As he lay tossing upon his bunk, he reached inside his shirt pocket. There was the little card that had been handed to him outside the mission days before. He squinted at it in the dim light. On the one side it had only one sentence, and it was this: “*If I were to die tonight, I would go to _____.*”

The blank space at the end of the sentence burned into his soul. It tormented him; it haunted his mind. He put the card away and tried to forget it, but he couldn’t. Then he examined it again. There was writing on the other side too. He could hardly make it out. It said, “*For God*

so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Over and over he read it What a message! Tears began to come down the weather-beaten face. He reached for the stub of a pencil. He wrote something on the card, fell back and was gone.

Shortly after, the doctor found him. A grimy little card was on his chest. It read, “*If I were to die tonight, I would go to _____,*” and then – there it was, in an almost illegible scrawl – he had written one word, “Heaven.” The card then read, “*If I were to die tonight, I would go to Heaven.*” The old captain had found the Captain of his salvation. He had been born again!

Every person hearing these words must give some conclusion to that statement. There are only two words you can write. You must decide, “*If I were to die tonight, I would go to _____.*” What will your answer be?

You cannot avoid death or coming face-to-face with God, but you can be prepared. The simple, sure way is here and now to trust Jesus Christ to forgive you and save you, to commit your soul forever into His hands. He will forgive you and save you. The moment you trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, that moment He takes away your guilt and gives you a new heart. That moment your sins are forgiven.

Do not wait for feeling or convenience, but right now, as a solemn act of the will, choose to trust Christ as your Savior.