

Life's Greatest Fear

Text: Hebrews 2:14-15 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (*Jesus*) also himself likewise took part of the same; that *through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

I Corinthians 15:24-26 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

I Corinthians 15:54-57 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Introduction: I want to preach about a subject we seldom speak about and try to avoid thinking about, but is the big *“Elephant in the Room”* for all of us. It is listed as one of “Life’s Greatest Fear” – the subject is **DEATH!**

First, please let me say, it is not my desire to reopen old wounds of past sorrows. *This sermon isn’t about our departed loved ones. God has them in His hands and nothing I say will help or harm them! This sermon is for the LIVING!* Those who are seeking help in preparing for their own appointed death! Also, hopefully, it will bring comfort to those who are in a season of mourning as we study together **“Life’s Greatest Fear”!**

I. Death is a common theme of the Bible: it is mentioned 372 times in the KJV Bible – (note: life is mentioned 450 times). *As a gospel preacher who must one day stand before my Master who sent me, I are required to preach the entire Bible (from cover to cover), not just subjects I like or to please my listeners!*

II. Hebrews 9:27 say, *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* - **Let us explore this important topic of the Bible called “DEATH”.**

According to a *“Psychology Today”* article, by *Karl Albrecht Ph.D.*, & dated 3/22/2012, there are only five basic fears out of which almost all other fears are manufactured. *Guess which one is first on the list – DEATH?* (listed in the article as *“Extinction”*) Please note the following quote from the article:

“Extinction – the fear of annihilation, of ceasing to exist... The idea of no longer being - arouses a primary existence anxiety in all normal humans. Consider that panicky feeling you get when you look over the edge of a high building.”

III. What is so fearful about Death?

- *It is the greatest unknown of life.* Many people have stories of an “out-of-the-body” experience. Some have even written of receiving a glimpse beyond the door of death into eternity. Yet, how can we be sure their stories are true? Will we take a stranger’s word on such an important matter? Will we leap into the unknown realm of death relying on stories we read somewhere in the past from a stranger? Actually, whatever they say on the subject cannot be trusted because they do not all say the same thing. Some stories are similar but others are far different! Which ones are true and which ones false? Some follow the pattern of the bible. Others do not! After all the stories are told, death still remains a mystery! **The Bible is the only trustworthy source on the mystery of death and what lays beyond the grave!**
- *Death affects everyone:* Death has a far reaching effect upon our world! You may be mourning a recent death of someone you love or you may be having a haunting anxiety over your death sometime in the future! Death is a sad and scary thing to think about! WHETHER WE THINK ABOUT IT OR NOT, THE DEATH RATE FOR OUR WORLD IS STILL 100 PERCENT! ONE DAY WE WILL DIE TOO!
 - 8,460 daily deaths in America (3.1 million per year) (approximate pop. of Covington TN - 8,575)
 - 150,000 people die worldwide each day (approximate pop. of Jackson MS)

- 62.4 million died in the world in 2024 (www.database.earth/population/world/deaths) – (Italy pop. 58.9 million)
- We all try to avoid unpleasant things or subjects we fear. Since we cannot see what's around the corner of life, we avoid thinking or talking about it. We busy ourselves with every other activity in the world to avoid thinking about the subject; yet, if we are honest, **it is always setting somewhere in the back of our mind.**

According to an *Ethos Life Insurance Company* survey conducted in July 2022 reveals how often Americans think on death:

- 45% of Americans think on death monthly
- 23% of Americans think on death daily
- 50% of Americans have been thinking on death more often since the COVID -19 Pandemic

IV. The Bible is a faithful guide to all of life's mysteries and a comfort to all fears - including death!

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT DEATH? Please note the following biblical teachings on the subject of death:

(1). Where did Death originate? *Death originated in the Garden of Eden*

Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely die.**

Genesis 5:3-5 And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters: And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: **and he died.**

(2). Death has been a fear and mystery since ancient times:

Job 14:12-14 So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! **If a man die, shall he live again?**

Psalms 55:4-6 My heart is sore pained within me: and **the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.** And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.

(3). Many People live with a crippling “FEAR of DEATH”:

Hebrews 2:14-15 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Jesus) also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; **And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**

Other bible translations may bring out Hebrews 2:15 a little clearer than KJV:

- NIV - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death
- NLT - only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying
- Contemporary English – but he also died to rescue all of us who live each day in fear of dying
- Amplified – that He might free all those who through the haunting fear death were held in slavery throughout their lives

Matthew Henry Commentary on Hebrews 2:15... (CHRIST BECAME A MAN & DIED) ...that he might deliver his own people from the slavish fear of death to which they are often subject... whose minds are often in perplexing fears about death and eternity. Christ became man, and died, to deliver them from those perplexities of soul, by letting them know that death is not only a conquered enemy, but a reconciled friend, not sent to hurt the soul, or separate it from the love of God, but to put an end to all their grievances and complaints, and to give them a passage to eternal life and blessedness so that to them death is not now

in the hand of Satan, but in the hand of Christ--not Satan's servant, but Christ's servant--has not hell following it, but heaven to all who are in Christ.

(4). Death is called - Our Last Enemy:

I Corinthians 15:24-27 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

Why is it called "our last enemy"? BECAUSE IT WILL CONTINUE TO EXIST ON EARTH UNTIL THE END OF THE BIBLE AGE!

Revelation 20:10-14 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 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. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. **And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.**

(5). What is Death? Is it a Person or a Spirit (the Grim Reaper)? Does Death have a power of its own in the Kingdom of Darkness? Does Satan have a Helper that works under his command called Death? Does Death in itself have any power at all over life? NO, NO, NO, NO TO ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS – There isn't a real Grim Reaper - Death does not possess any power at all in itself-

The Grim Reaper image may have originated from a misinterpretation of Revelations 6:7-8 *And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.*

Revelation 6:7-8 is a real force unsealed by God and released upon the earth during the Tribulation Period but the image of Death on a Pale Horse is symbolic in nature and is misinterpreted if taken literally due to the following facts:

- If you give life to the image of Death on a Pale Horse, you must also give life to Hell because it is following close behind Death
- If you give life to the image of Death on a Pale Horse, the ANTICHRIST must come riding on a real white horse carrying a bow in his hand
- If you give life to the image of Death on a Pale Horse, WAR becomes a living person too and comes to earth riding on a red horse with a drawn sword
- If you give life to the image of Death on a Pale Horse, FAMINE becomes alive and rides on a black horse carrying a pair of scale in his arms

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are symbolic of real forces sent from God during the Tribulation Period with specialized duties to accomplish – the forces are real and are to be taken literally but not the portrayed symbolism! (similar to us giving real names to forces of nature called hurricanes - i.e., Katrina)

What is Death? Clinically speaking - Death is the shutting down of an earthly body due to aging, or a severe illness/disease, or encountering a traumatic event that overwhelms a body to such a degree that it cannot overcome! **DEATH IS AN EVENT!**

Death (according to the Bible) for the Christian is similar in nature to the following:

- ❖ The turning off a car motor
- ❖ The flipping off of a light switch
- ❖ Walking through a one way door into another room
- ❖ Crossing a river
- ❖ Walking across a border into another country

(6). Jesus showed on three occasions that He is greater than Death:

- Widow of Nain's son, **Luke 7:11-17**
- Jaruis's daughter, **Matt. 9:18-26, Mark 5:21-43, & Luke 8:40-56**
- Lazarus, **John 11:23-26** *Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*

It is not recorded in the Bible that Jesus ever attended a funeral – everywhere he encountered death; while doing His Father's work, He defeated it!

(7). Please allow me to REDIRECT a person's Fear of Death to a TRUE & PROPER FEAR:

Matthew 10:28 *...fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* **FEAR GOD not Death!**

WITHOUT SALVATION & GOD'S GRACE, YOU ARE IN REAL TROUBLE WHEN YOU DIE!

Lost Humanity is still under the sting of death. There is no other remedy for deliverance other than through Christ!

John 8:21-24 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. **I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.**

(8). Jesus Conquered Death - once and for all – on behalf of his followers:

Revelation 1:18 *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

I Corinthians 15:54-57 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(9). How can we know (with certainty) that we are prepared to meet Death?

If we simply obey Christ's Plan of Salvation – Confess our Sins to God, Ask for Forgiveness, and Ask Christ into our heart by faith. Afterwards, according to the Bible, we can know for sure we are Saved!

Romans 10:9-10 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

I John 5:12-13 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have **I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life**, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

Romans 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither DEATH, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(10). How do we deal with Death?

May I remind you of our Greatest Weapon when we are mourning over Death! -- THE HOLY SPIRIT!
John 14:16 ...I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

Isaiah 61:1 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; **he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted**, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

- 1) **Look at the example of how Jesus dealt with his people at the death of Lazarus:**

It shows us that God understands our sorrows and mourning over death:

John 11:20-21 (LAZARUS) Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

John 11:33-35 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. **35 Jesus wept. THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES THE SAME FOR US TODAY!**

- 2) God draws closer to His children when they are experiencing seasons of mourning!
- 3) His Love is overwhelming and priceless when we are mourning!
- 4) God brings Peace to our troubled heart! Not just once but many times throughout the mourning process!
- 5) God begins the process of Healing our hearts!
- 6) God Strengthen us in miraculous ways so we can keep going!
- 7) God will eventually give to His Children the OIL OF JOY for the Spirit of Heaviness!

Isaiah 61:3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

Closing: DEATH IS A GLORIOUS EVENT FOR THE CHILDREN OF GOD. IT IS OUR HOMECOMING!

I Corinthians 15:54-57 Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Charles Spurgeon - Morning and Evening – Morning of February 7th

Arise, and depart.

The hour is approaching when the message will come to us, as it comes to all—"Arise, and go forth from the home in which thou hast dwelt, from the city in which thou hast done thy business, from thy family, from thy friends. Arise, and take thy last journey." And what know we of the journey? And what know we of the country to which we are bound?

A little we have read thereof, and somewhat has been revealed to us by the Spirit; but how little do we know of the realms of the future! We know that there is a black and stormy river called "Death." God bids us cross it, promising to be with us. And, after death, what cometh? What wonder-world will open upon our astonished sight? What scene of glory will be unfolded to our view?

No traveller has ever returned to tell. But we know enough of the heavenly land to make us welcome our summons thither with joy and gladness. The journey of death may be dark, but we may go forth on it fearlessly, knowing that God is with us as we walk through the gloomy valley, and therefore we need fear no evil. We shall be departing from all we have known and loved here, but we shall be going to our Father's house-to our Father's home, where Jesus is-to that royal "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

This shall be our last removal, to dwell for ever with Him we love, in the midst of His people, in the presence of God. Christian, meditate much on heaven, it will help thee to press on, and to forget the toil of the way. This vale of tears is but the pathway to the better country: this world of woe is but the stepping-stone to a world of bliss.