

How Will You Die?

We look forward to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. If, however, He does not return soon, in approximately one hundred years or less, everyone reading these words will have died. You are no exception. It is verified and promised in the Bible: *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27). David recognized not only our vulnerability, but the possible imminence of death’s occurrence when he said to Jonathan, *“...truly as the LORD lived, and as thy soul lived, there is but a step between me and death”* (I Samuel 20:3). The fact of death is therefore established. The question I bring to you today is: How will you die? Observe two contrasts: (1) *“And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?”* (II Samuel 3:33). (2) *“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints”* (Psalm 116:15). I want to talk about three conditions in which someone may die.

I. Lost

Perhaps the saddest word in the English language is “lost.” Jesus said, *“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”* (Mark 8:36). Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. said, “The greatest truth that ever changed my life was when I realized I had to live somewhere forever.”

The Psalmist seemed confused when he wrote, *“For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men”* (Psalm 73: 3-5). A few verses later, he seemed to have a wake-up call and declared, *“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors”* (Psalm 73:17-19). When the Psalmist entered the house of God, information was given to him that served as a “rest of the story” moment. At first it seemed the unbelieving died as well as the believers. It seemed they had no “bands” or fettered pains associated with their deaths. Through God’s instruction, he saw that the wicked were like a man who had slipped into a precipice of destruction and could find no traction. He described it as sudden terror! To die without Christ is to die lost. Notice four characteristics of the death of the lost:

A. Fear

Proverbs 1:27,28: *“When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.”*: Job 18:11: *“Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet.”*

B. Darkness

Job 18:5,6: *“Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him.”* Matthew 22:13: *“Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

C. Trapped

Job 18:8-10: *“For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare. The gin (spring-loaded trap) shall take him by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him. The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way.”* A lost person’s death is like a trapped animal which may fight once trapped, but only ends up more entangled.

D. Regret

The rich man, in Hell already and regretting the life he lived and not wanting his kindred to follow in his same path, cried out in Luke 16:28: *“For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”*

II. Saved and In the Will of God

The best possible way to pass from this earth is to be saved and in the will of God. The testimony of saints who have passed is phenomenal and beautiful. D. L. Moody’s dying words were, “Earth is receding, heaven is opening, God is calling.” Truly, this is the way to go! Notice four characteristics of this death:

A. Ready

II Timothy 4:6: *“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.”* This person, like Paul is ready for the great adventure!

B. Finished

II Timothy 4:7a,b: *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course....”* A person in the center of God’s will can say with the Lord Jesus, *“...I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do”* (John 17:4). There is no unfinished business here. No regrets of a life well lived.

C. Faithful

II Timothy 4:7c: *“...I have kept the faith.”* There is no greater thing to be said to a person entering the presence the Lord than that which we hear from the Lord Jesus in Matthew 25:21: *“His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things,*

I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21).

D. Anticipating

II Timothy 4: 8: *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”* What a contrast to the unbeliever’s death! They have nothing in which to look forward, on the other hand, our joys will just be beginning.

III. Saved and Out of the Will of God

In Ruth 2:12, we are told, *“The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God...”* (Ruth 2:12a). For those who know Christ but did not invest fully in His will, they will not receive the “full” reward God intended for them. The death of this person has four characteristics:

A. Disciplinary

Hebrews 12:7a: *“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons...”* Hebrews 12:9b: *“...shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?”* I John 5:16: *“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death....”*

B. Premature

“...Why shouldest thou die before thy time?” (Ecclesiastes 7:17).

C. Despoiled

Jesus Christ is the foundation on which we build our life. If we serve Him faithfully we shall be building with *“...gold, silver, precious stones...”* (I Corinthians 3:12). If we do not serve Him we are building with *“...wood, hay, stubble”* (I Corinthians 3:12). The summation is given: *“Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire”* (I Corinthians 3:13-15). He or she does not lose their salvation, but they will lose their rewards.

D. Disappointing

I Kings 15:5: *“Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.”* Sixty-four years after King David’s death the Word of God still reminds us that due to

David's moral lapse there was a measure of disappointment in the death of the man who was called "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22).

-Pastor Pope-