

THE ONLY 2 CERTAINTIES OF LIFE

© 2002 By Mark Beaird

Text: Hebrews 9:27-28

The old saying is that, “Only two things are certain, death and taxes.” Well, the truth is thousands of people get out of paying taxes every year. Some can always find a way to beat the system. However, there are two things that really are certain—death and judgment.

“Despite the quest for wellness, risk-assessment analysis, and the good works of Ralph Nader, nobody has yet created a way to make life last forever. You and I will die. So we might as well get on with the only really pressing business there is: figuring out how to die well.” -- William H. Willimon. *Leadership*, Vol. 11, no. 3.

Let's look at the *facts* concerning these two *certainties* of life.

I. BECAUSE OF SIN, *DEATH IS A REALITY THAT ALL MUST FACE.*

A. All have sinned and therefore all are subject to death.

Romans 5:12 tells us that, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned...”

B. The reality of death is unchangeable—however our death is NOT predetermined.

Listen to what this scripture is teaching. The idea that “Whatever will be will be” and that God has determined our day of death is not scriptural. Nowhere does scripture teach that we have an appointed day on which we will die—only that humans do die and therefore must make preparation for death.

Secondly, we believe that prayer works to change things. Therefore, we can pray and enter a right relationship with God. We become born again. Then, we pray that the Lord's will be done in our lives, that we will prosper in our Christian life, that we will accomplish His work and accomplish the task He has given us.

So What? -----

In His sovereignty, God has given us a certain amount of control over our lives—it's called free will.

- ❖ We can choose life.
- ❖ We can choose God's will
- ❖ We can choose to pray and believe for God's divine intervention.
- ❖ We can choose a course of action that will lengthen our days.
- ❖ We can choose a life that will be a blessed life.

B. Because of Jesus Christ our destiny does not have to bring dread to our hearts.

Note verse 28 of our text: *“Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”*

Christ will return and bring with Him the gift of eternal life for those who are looking for Him.

1. First Christ will completely destroy death.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:21-26, “For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

2. Secondly, we will be clothed in immortality.

Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 15:51-57, “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with

immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

CONCLUSION (If divided here)

I was in the check out line the other day when a woman approached the checkout with a large floral arrangement and several small children in tow. As I stood there I overheard one of the little girls ask what the flowers were for. The woman responded that they were for the grave of someone (a lady she called by name, presumably a relative) who had recently died. "Remember she died not too long ago." The lady said to the child. "How did she die?" the girl asked. The woman responded, "She was killed in a car accident." It was then that many of the past tragedies that I have witnessed were brought to mind. Parents, children, friends—some older, some younger—but all people cut down in the prime of life. I do not have the wisdom, knowledge or space to explain the "why" of it all. Even the very idea of offering words, seems at best, an inadequate offering.

The girl in the store asked one more question that stirred me. She asked, "Did she die again?" "No," the woman responded. No, I thought, there is no reason to die twice as long as we know Jesus. I couldn't help but think of what John said in Revelation 20:6, "Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them." NIV

II. BECAUSE OF SIN, *JUDGMENT IS A REALITY THAT ALL MUST FACE.*

Text: verse 27, *“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...”*

A. All have sinned and therefore are subject to judgment.

Romans 3:23 plainly tells us that, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”

2 Corinthians 5:10 explains the destiny of humanity. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

B. The reality of judgment is unchangeable—however if we know Christ we have no reason to fear.

John writes in 1 John 4:17-18, “In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”

C. Because of Jesus Christ our destiny does not have to bring fear to our hearts.

Paul explains in Romans 3:22-24 that, “This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

God has willingly justified all who will accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

CONCLUSION

The facts are that the only way our eternal destiny can ever be altered for the good is through Jesus Christ. Death is a fact. Judgment is a fact. But, salvation is also a fact!

Can I propose that Jesus began his public ministry the same way he ended it? He ended his ministry being crucified, covered with the sins of the world. He began his ministry being baptized, identifying volitionally with the sins of the world.

Would you allow me a couple of minutes of silliness? Let me give you a vision of what could have happened that day. It expresses, as I see it, the implications of what is going on here. We're standing around there, and we understand that big things like this have to be organized. We make a plan. One of us says, "When you decide to come and repent, folks, we want you to register. We'll get your name down on a mailing list, and we'll give you a name tag so that the baptizers can be more personal with you. Just step forward, and tell us your first name and your most awful sin."

Up to this table steps Bob. "Name?"

"Bob."

"What's your most awful sin, Bob?"

"I stole some money from my boss once." The person takes a marker and writes, BOB: EMBEZZLER.

Next person: "Name?"

"Mary."

"Mary, what's your most awful sin?"

"I slandered some people. I said things that weren't true. I just didn't like them. So the person writes, MARY: SLANDERER.

"Name?"

"George."

"What's your most awful sin?"

"I've been coveting my neighbor's Corvette." GEORGE: COVETER.

"Name?"

"Gordon. "

"Gordon, your most awful sin?"

Adultery. GORDON: ADULTERER.

And the person writing, with some degree of gloating, slaps the name tag on the chest of each person. Then all these people, with their name tags and their most awful sins, line up by the river, waiting to be baptized in repentance.

Up to the table comes Jesus. Jesus' most awful sin? Well, there aren't any. So Jesus starts walking down the line. He steps up to Bob and says, "Bob, give me your name tag," and he puts it on himself. "Mary, give me your name tag." He puts it on himself. "George, give me your name tag." It goes on himself. "Gordon, give me your name tag."

Soon the Son of God is covered with name tags and awful sins. Someone comes up and gently says to Jesus, "It's a nice thing you're doing. If you must do this, couldn't you take off a few of the worst ones? If you're going to spawn a messianic movement, you've got to be above reproach. Why don't you take off the tag that says, MURDERER. Take the adulterer tag off, too. Those are too despicable. We're talking about nines and tens here."

Jesus says, "You don't realize that I am the Son of David. David had to wear those name tags, and I will not write him off, for I have forgiven him."

In my vision, I see Jesus going to the water to present himself to John. The Savior is baptized. At the risk of being trite, in my vision, the people who had the markers didn't buy indelible ink. When Jesus comes up, all of the ink has been washed away and is going down the river. And I recall the words, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

That's what repentance does. And that's what Jesus' ministry is all about. Without him, you and I are stuck.

-- Gordon MacDonald, "Repentance," Preaching Today, Tape No. 121.