

LET'S TALK ABOUT DYING

ECCLESIASTES 12:7 • TV061B

A television broadcast sermon delivered

SUNDAY, MARCH 19TH, 1978

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Transcribed, edited and published

MARCH 28TH, 2018

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Ecclesiastes 12:7

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

Let's talk about dying. Now I know that to many of us this is not a pleasant subject and we don't want to even think about it, let alone talk about it. But I'd like to talk about dying. The Word of God talks about dying.

In **2 Samuel 14:14** it says; *“We must needs die and we are as waters spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again.”*

Job wrote in chapter **7:1**; *“Is there not an appointed time to man on the earth? I shall sleep in the dust.”*

Job wrote again in chapter **14:1**; *“Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower and is cut down. He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not.”*

David wrote about it in **Psalms 89:48**; *“What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? Shall man deliver his soul from the grave?”*

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Paul wrote about it in **Hebrews 9:27** and he said: *“It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment.”* The Word of God talks about death. We ought to talk about it. God’s Word talks about it.

And then the seasons and nature talk about death. Spring comes and we see life beginning to bud. We see the little flowers begin to poke their heads out of the ground. And we see the buds on the trees and then the flowers begin to bloom on the fruit trees.

And then summer comes along and gives us the full bloom of life. There are the flowers blooming and there’s the fruit on the trees and there is our corn and tomatoes and potatoes and vegetables all growing.

But after a few weeks you begin to see spots on the leaves. What’s happening? They’re dying. You begin to see brown spots on the flowers. What’s happening? They’re dying. You begin to see these marks on the vegetables and the fruit. What’s happening? They’re dying.

And then winter comes and like it is right now, nothing out there is alive. It’s all dead, it’s all dead. So; the seasons talk about death. These things wither and die. There’s death all about us.

Isaiah 40:6-8 says; *“All flesh is grass and the beauty of man, the glory of man, as the flower of the field, the grass withereth, the flower fadeth. The Spirit of God bloweth upon it but the Word of God abideth forever.”* Man is not going to abide forever; we’ve got to die.

The seasons (nature) talks about dying. And then, you’ve got a message a lot closer home than even the Bible on your coffee table or the trees out in your yard. Your bodies are talking about dying, your bodies are telling you about death.

If you’ll read Ecclesiastes chapter 12 the first eight verses of **Ecclesiastes chapter 12: 7 and 8 verses**: *“Man’s going to his long home and the mourners go about the streets.”* But those first seven verses talk about; the weary body, about the failing eye, about the ear not being able to hear, about the graying of the hair, the wrinkled brow and the empty chair.

What’s happening, what’s happening to you? You’re dying. Your body is dying. Your body is delivering to you a message, you’re dying. God’s Word says it, nature says it, the seasons say it, and your body says you’re dying. And what fools we are not to listen.

You know, our Lord Jesus Christ told the story one time about a rich young man, a young man. I guess he was in his 30’s or late 20’s. But he was a wealthy young fellow. He just had everything he needed.

In fact, he was lying on his bed one night and he had so much he didn’t know how to use it. He was lying there thinking about all of his barns that were all full. And he said; “I know what I’ll do; he said I’ll just tear down these little barns and build me bigger barns and I’ll have more

room in which to bestow my goods. And I'll say to my soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry."

And God came to him that night and said; "Man, you're a fool. This night shalt thy soul be required of thee and then who shall these things be that you've accumulated?"

Oh yes, our bodies tell us we're dying and God's telling us we're dying. And my subject is one upon which it is impossible to say anything new; it's all been said. It's been said again and again!

But you know, the sad thing is, the problem is, it's been said but it hasn't been heard. Now that's the whole problem. Death's not uncommon. Death's not unusual. Pick up your paper in the morning; you'll never pick up a Huntington or Ashland or Ironton paper or a Charleston paper without the name of someone being in the obituary column every day.

From the time Abel died under the hand of his angry brother; every son of Adam has died. Death's not uncommon. Death is not unusual. Since Adam all men have died but men won't listen, they won't listen.

The Scripture says; "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." But who's hearing? We're saying these things but nobody's listening. I guess Amos put it as simply and as plainly and powerfully as it's ever been stated, "Prepare to meet thy God."

Oh for ears to hear, oh for eyes to see, oh for a heart to understand. Oh for a mind to grasp the things that God almighty has written. Oh for the sense, for the spiritual sense, to set my thoughts on things above, not on the perishing, decaying, vanishing, things of this world, that Solomon called, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Let's talk about dying and let's not only talk about it; let's think about it. And let's not only think about it; let's consider it.

Now; I'm choosing for my text today Job 16:22. I recommend that you read it with me, Job 16:22; Job says, "*When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.*"

Now there are four things suggested here:

First of all: The person, the certain person, referred to, he says; "*When a few years are come I shall go.*"

Now all of us recognize that all men are mortal. We know that. There's no argument there. I needn't spend any time on that. We know that all men are mortal. We know also that all men must die.

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Now we know that don't we? We know that all men must go to the grave, all men. I'd get no argument there. But we're slow to learn and slow to realize that I must die. This is what Job was saying.

He's not saying, "That in a few years all men must go the way from which they shall not return." He says, "In a few years I shall go." Oh for a heart that makes personal application of what God says, a personal application.

Now; I'm acquainted with death, most preachers are, some more than others. As a pastor I have buried many dear friends. I've been pastor of the same church for almost 27 years. And in that time I have buried many good friends. I'm acquainted with death.

As a son I have buried both my father and my mother. And as a family member I have buried my only brother. And as a father I have buried my 21 year old son. I have buried many of my close friends and loved ones.

And in these experiences God has taught me something; He has taught me that these have died and He has taught me also that I must die. It's certainly true that we do not really believe anything until we experience it; isn't that right? We don't really believe anything till we experience it.

But I'll tell you this and I speak frankly from my heart, not only from the Word of God, not only from an aging body, but I speak from my heart, I am expecting God's Son; I'm looking for that call of God.

I'm listening for that day when someone says, "The Master's here and He's calling for you." Do you believe that could happen to you tonight? Do you really? Do you believe that actually the Lord might come this very day and say, "The Master's here and He's calling for you?"

You and I ought to be brought to the place where we expect death. No, I'm not being morbid; I'm stating truth and I'm stating fact. Actually, my friend; it's amazing we've lived so long.

Someone said one time; "It's amazing that a harp, (speaking of the human body) of so many strings, stays in tune so long." There's so many things that can happen to this body. It's actually a masterpiece; the Psalmist said, "*How wonderfully, I am made.*"

But also, it's a fragile thing. The least thing can take it away. And it's not amazing my friend that we have, that men die; it's amazing to me that men live as long as they do. There are so many ways to die; there's so many things to call us away.

But you know, to the believer death is gain. It's not loss to die; it's gain. I'll lose an old body and get a new one. I'll lose a life of sin and gain a life of perfect holiness. I'll lose pain and gain eternal happiness. I'll lose the prospect of death and gain eternal life.

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Paul said, "To live is Christ, to die is gain. I have a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better." Why do we hold on to this valley of tears and why are we so reluctant to let it go? Why do we cling to this old, frail, suffering, sick, sorrowful, dying, bleeding, weeping, frail body? Why do we hang on to it so long and so hard when God has a new body waiting on us?

Why, "If this earthly tabernacle, (this tent be dissolved) we have a building, a house eternal, in the heavens, not made with hands, (but made by God, that'll never weep, that'll never know sorrow, that'll never know pain, that'll never know tears)."

But yet, we just hang on to this old earth and hang on to this old life and hang on to this old body. To die is gain; it's gain for the believer!

And I'll tell you, if it ever comes to the place where I expect to die and expect God to call me I'll begin to live. I'll begin to live with a peace and a joy and a happiness that I never knew, when I'll quit fearing the future and put it in the hands of the Lord, when I'll quit fearing death and rest in Him, when I'll quit fearing calamity and trial and just rest in Him, I'll find some happiness, some happiness here in this life.

Secondly: We've talked about that certain person, "I shall go." Now let's talk about that certain journey, "*Man goeth to his long home.*"

Now listen, when the day comes for God to take me away from here there is no power and no force in heaven or earth or hell that can prevent it. I shall go. That's what Job said: "In a few years I shall go, (not I might, or perhaps) I shall go."

I've heard about death; now I'm going to experience it. That day's coming. I've heard about the grave; now I must lie down in it. I've heard about judgment, now I must face it. I've heard about eternity, now I must enter it.

Let me, ask you to do something right now and I'll do it with you. I ask you to place yourself in this position right now; the hour is come. God's determined hour is here. The instrument of death is revealed. In just a few moments I'm leaving this earth.

The prophet said, "How will you do (how will it fare with you) in the swelling of the Jordan?" If that hour was here right this moment, some things that were important are of no value now and no importance. And some things that I've neglected, some things that weren't of great importance, are now of the greatest importance.

Isn't that right? You know, when we come to die, somebody says; "Well, was he old or young?" What difference does it make? Somebody says; "Well, was he rich or poor?" Well, what difference does it make?

Now, it makes a lot of difference to people. Age and youth; we talk about it a lot. It makes a lot of difference to people while they are living but when I come to die what difference does it make?

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I know wealth and possessions make a lot of difference to a lot of people. But when that hour comes, "Naked I came into this world, naked I shall leave."

Somebody says, "Well, was he famous or unknown?" Well John Kennedy is dead and that old tramp that died on the streets of Dallas that day down by the waterfront; he's dead too, they are both dead.

The whole world knew one of them and nobody but a mother knew the other one. They are both dead. And do you know what matters now? Well, it's not their wealth, and not their fame, and not their strength, and not their education and not their power.

Do you know the sole issue in the hour of death? Did he know the Lord? That's about the size of it. When a man comes to die about all that's important is this; did he know the living God? Did he know Christ Jesus? Are your sins forgiven? Do you have a Redeemer?

You know, Job said that. He knew he was going to die and he said; "*I know that my Redeemer liveth and on this earth He shall stand. And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh, I'm going to see the Lord, not another, I myself; I'm going to see the Lord.*"

All though the fine things about our fame, our goodness, our works, our position, and our wealth, melt like the frost before the morning sun in the hour of death. These things don't matter. All of our great experiences and all of our knowledge that leads us to believe that we're somebody of some great account; when we come to die; they are of small account.

Death reveals the truth about us. Death blows away the chaff that we thought was wheat. When a man comes to die he looks as a sinner to the mercy of God and that's all he is.

He may be a rich sinner or a poor sinner. He may be an old sinner or a young sinner. He may be an educated sinner or an ignorant sinner. But when a man comes to die he's just a sinner looking to the mercy of God, that's all.

He must look as the guilty to the grace of God. Dying men want reality. Dying men care nothing for sham professions and emotional religion and flimsy hypocrisy and numbers in Sunday school and all these other things.

Dying men need a Saviour. Dying men need mercy. Dying men need an atonement. Dying men need a ransom, dying men need a Mediator, and dying men need a Redeemer. God doesn't need me; I need Him. I desperately need Him.

And I need Him in the hour of death. Usually, men die as they live. That's right; usually men die as they live. If they live seeking the Lord they'll die seeking the Lord. If they live trusting the Lord they'll die trusting the Lord.

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If they live seeking mercy they'll die seeking mercy. If they live calling on God they'll die calling on God. And if they live in a fellowship and a relationship with the living Redeemer they'll die in that fellowship.

We've seen that certain person, "I shall go." We've seen that certain journey, "*Man goeth to his long home.*"

Thirdly: Now let's look at that certain hour, "*In a few years.*"

It may not be that long. You know, some of us, I wonder, maybe myself, and maybe you; but I wonder if we might be reading this in a few days? You reckon, I'm reading that to you today or to myself; "in a few days I shall go?"

It could be that I'm reading it, "in a few hours." But this I know, whether it be a few years, months, weeks, days or hours; that day is determined by the Lord. I'm not a fatalist. I believe in a living God. I believe in an almighty God. I don't believe in fate; I believe in God.

I don't believe in luck. I don't believe luck has a thing in the world to do with my life. I believe God has a whole lot to do with it.

I'm not superstitious. I think we ought to discard all of these old superstitions and all of this use of the word luck here and lucky, "wasn't he lucky?" No sir; he was blessed of God. God had mercy on him. I don't believe in luck! I believe our lives are in the hands of a sovereign God. And the Scripture says, In Job 14:5, that day of my death is determined by my heavenly Father. "*Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.*" Do you know what bounds are? They are boundaries. That's as far as you go. "*Thou hast appointed (set) his bounds; he cannot pass.*"

David said that; he said: "*A thousand will fall at your right side and ten thousand at your left but they won't come nigh you until God sees fit.*"

Now my friend; listen to me, will you listen to me a minute? Rather than upsetting me this gives me great comfort. The fact that God has determined my day of death gives me great comfort. That's right; it makes me happy. It gives me peace in my heart.

Do you know why? Well here's the reason, if I'm God's child by faith in Christ, by His mercy, I shall not die until God's appointed time which will be for His glory and for my good. Because He said, "*All things work together for good to them who love God, who are the called according to His purpose.*"

And when God, if God has set the day of my death, my bounds are set and, "*The number of my months are with the Lord.*" I'm His child, and the day I die will be for His glory and my good. It will also be for the good of all concerned in my death. That's right!

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I need not be concerned for any of these things when the all-wise heavenly Father has planned it for my good and His glory. Let it come, any extension of that time would not be for my good if God says this day is for my good; the next day won't be.

This day is. God has planned it, all of it from eternity past. It's all in His hand. In that day, whenever it is; it is but a short time off, that Job was using the right words; he said: "In a few years, (not many years, not a long years), but in a few years."

So I'm saying this, if there's a work to be done let's do it. "The night cometh when no man can work." If there's a Gospel to be preached, let's preach it. He said, "*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.*"

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow. You know not what a day will bring forth. Today is the day of salvation. Now is the accepted time." Be busy about the Master's business. Be a good steward of the grace of God.

If there's a burden to be born, bear it. It won't be for long. If there's a salvation to seek and there is in Christ, seek it. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found."

Nobody in the grave is seeking the Lord. Nobody at the judgment is seeking the Lord. Nobody in hell is seeking the Lord. People who are seeking the Lord are seeking the Lord right here on this earth.

Yes sir; Abraham dwelt in tents and so do we. You are living in a tent and I'm living in a tent. It's a frail tent. It's a falling tent. It's a fading tent. But "Abraham looked for a city;" do you? "*The hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live.*"

And I want you to listen carefully to it. We've seen that certain person, "I shall go." We've seen that certain journey, "*Man goeth to his long home.*" We've seen that certain hour, "In a few years (or months or weeks or days)."

Fourthly: Now that certain realization and Job said, Job 16:22; "*When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.*" I shall not come back. My friend; I shall not return to my home.

The example that I set before my children and before my wife: If God calls me away tonight, it's set, it's fixed, and I can't change it. The attitude that I've had around my loved ones in my home; it's fixed, there's no changing it.

The way that I treat Him, my family, my loved ones, my children, my wife; it's fixed. The way I treated my parents; it's fixed. I shall not return. I shall not return to improve on it. I shall not return to change it; it's all over.

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One of these days I'm going to walk through that door and I'm not coming back. That's what Job is saying: "I shall not return." I'm not coming back to this home to straighten out the mess I've made, to take back the words I've said, to undo the deeds I've done, to change the example I've set; it's over, it's over.

You got another week? Use it for God's glory? You got another month? You got another year? I don't know, maybe you have. Use it for God's glory. Instead of being so disgruntle and unhappy and complaining and murmuring and finding fault and making everybody miserable, why don't you seek the Lord and find in Him that joy and grace, and new nature and love, that He sheds abroad in the hearts of those who know Him.

Huh? It's time to seek the Lord. I don't mean religion. I don't mean to go down to some church this morning and walk an aisle and come back just as ornery as you were before you went. I'm not talking about going down and getting religion, joining the church, and coming home just as mean as you ever were.

I'm talking about fall on your face and seek the Lord, a work of grace, a new birth, a new nature, something only God can do for you. No preacher can do it, only God can do it. Most preachers haven't experienced it themselves. How cannot they help you? You need Christ.

And I'll tell you this, I shall not return to my job or my friends. The memory of me is fixed. I should have loved and helped and understood them while I was living. The words I should have said will never be seen.

The words I should not have said will never be erased. They are stamped indelibly on their hearts and on their minds. I'm dead now and I can't change anything; I'm gone. I can change it right now.

By God's grace I can change it. By God's grace I can be a new creature in Christ Jesus. By God's grace the old man can be crucified and mortified. The new man put on the throne by God's grace, but after I'm dead, in a few days, in a few years, I'll go and I'm not coming back.

And then I'm not coming back to my church. Oh boy; you can think of a thousand reasons not to go to church but the day's coming when you won't be able to. You're not going to hear another sermon, you're not going to hear another hymn, you're not going to hear another prayer, and you're not going to have another opportunity to seek the Lord.

May your prayer be at this moment; Oh God help me to be what I intended to be. Oh God let me walk with thee. Oh God let me actually begin to be what I expect to be throughout eternity for the day is coming when I shall go and I won't be coming back!