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Are You Ready to Die?



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Twelve days ago death got closer to all of us.

Twelve days ago we saw for the first time in most of our lifetimes - death from war in our own country.

Twelve days ago about 6,818 fellow human died in the WTC attack on September 11th 2001.

Twelve days ago we saw fire, explosions, implosions, debris, smoke, dust, crumbling concrete, and twisted steel.

Over 55 million humans will enter eternity in 2001. Some will perish through starvation or murder, others through disease and accident. Some painlessly and others painfully, but all 55 plus million will DIE. Is that a result of a catastrophic tragedy? No it is daily life and death on planet earth! What's the real tragedy? Not death - all will die, some quietly, some slowly, and some violently as perhaps many thousands did in the terrorist attacks. But being unprepared - that's the ultimate tragedy.

Death is the ULTIMATE ENEMY, not Osama Bin Laden or any of his henchmen. Death is the real enemy. All humans rich or poor, armed or unarmed, weak or powerful, known or faceless - ALL ARE HELPLESS!

After death God will bring us back to life because our Lord Jesus is "the resurrection and the life."

And Death's not the end—"neath the cold black sod—

'Tis the Inn by the Road on our way to God.

JESUS ASSURES US THAT DEATH FOR HIS CHILDREN IS ONLY A SAILING SHIP

[Philippians 1:23](#) I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;

[2 Timothy 4:6](#) For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. [Hebrews 6:19](#) We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, That word *depart* was used for the loosing of an anchor. A.T. Robertson translates it "To weigh anchor and put out to sea." Philip Mauro suggests the picture here:

It is that of the forerunner used in ancient times to help a vessel enter the harbor safely. He would jump from the ship, wade to the harbor, and fasten the strong rope of the ship to a rock along the shore. Then, by means of a winch, the vessel was brought in. Just so, our forerunner has gone to heaven, where He stands ready to guide us safely into the Holy of Holies. We are fastened to a rock that cannot be moved. Let the storms tear our sails to shreds; let the floors creak; let the gusts of wind attempt to blow us off course; let the tides overwhelm us; we shall arrive safely into the port.

Each day we are pulled a notch closer to the harbor by the One who proved He is more powerful than death.

William James Kirkpatrick wrote a stirring hymn many years ago which ends with this triumphant chorus:

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move, Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.*

Part: 33 Do Troubles Push you Toward God?

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Part: 10 Is Your Cup Overflowing

Part: 9 Following Jesus as My Good Shepherd in the Hard Times of Life!

Part: 8 Is Your Head Oiled?

Part: 7 Following Jesus As My Good Shepherd

Part: 6 I AM THE DOOR: Entering Life Through Jesus

Part: 5 Have You Given Your Life to Jesus?

Part: 4 Jesus: I AM the Bread of Life

Part: 3 Jesus: I am the LIGHT in the Wilderness

Part: 2 Jesus: I AM the Light to follow

Part: 1 Jesus: I AM the Light to Trust

But we are not flotsam on the tides. We have a hope—a hope outside ourselves. There are powerful truths that cause us to have great hope in Christ our Salvation.

1. Jesus our High Priest is the anchor of our souls, who forever keeps us from drifting away from God. As believers, our relationship with Christ anchors us to God confidently because it is "within the veil" (v. 19).
2. The most sacred place in the Jewish temple was the holy of holies, which was veiled from the rest of the temple. Inside the holy of holies rested the ark of the covenant, which signified the glory of God. Only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, could the high priest of Israel enter beyond the veil and make atonement for the sins of his people.
3. But under the New Covenant, Christ made atonement once for all time and for all people by His sacrifice on the cross. The believer's soul is, in God's mind, already secured within the veil—His eternal sanctuary. [1]

Again listen to [Hebrews 6:19-20](#) We have this hope as **an anchor for the soul**, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

- **It is anchored in Heaven.** We have continual access to God's presence, not just once a year through a fallible man, but always—at every moment—through our high priest, Jesus Christ.
- **It is anchored in Christ**, our *prodromos* who has gone to prepare a place for us.
- **It is anchored in Christ**, our Melchizedekian priest who ministers perpetually and eternally.
- **It is anchored for sure**, for it is doubly impossible for God to lie. [2]

Our future existence [3] is not in the hands of doctors, nor in the hands of disease, nor in the hands of the drunk who runs into our car along the highway, or even the terrorist who slams 350 ton airplane fuel bombs into our office towers.

Our life is in the hands of the Almighty, who can use any means He wishes, including the above, to have us brought into the heavenly gates.

Perhaps today our name will be called. And to be ready we need to KNOW HIM!

Christ's 7-part calling card says I AM ALL YOU NEED seven times. Each one is a way that He says to us, I AM all you need. Trace them with me again

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE (6:35, 41, 48, 51) - Jesus is all I need to feed my STARVING SOUL; apart from Him is only unsatisfied hunger. Jesus alone feeds our soul and satisfies our hungers, all else is emptiness, hopelessness and empty mirages. *Jesus said I am your food that satisfies; I am the Bread you need. I have settled the longings of your soul, I can satisfy all the hungers of your life. What do you really hunger for? Believers are huNGERING FOR JESUS AS MY BREAD OF LIFE.*

I AM THE LIGHT OF WORLD (8:12) - Jesus is all I need to LIGHT my DARKENED SOUL; apart from Him is only impenetrable darkness. Jesus said I am the Light, I have settled the darkness of fear, the darkness of death, the darkness of dying, it is all settled by Me! *Believers are WALKING WITH JESUS WHO LIGHTS MY PATH OF LIFE.*

I AM THE DOOR OF life to my SHEEP (10:7,9) - Jesus is all I need to enter into God's Family, apart from Him is only hopeless exclusion. Jesus said I am the Door of Life, all your security and access needs are settled, by Me! We can't wander out without stumbling over Him and no predator could slip in without stirring Him. So Jesus says I keep you safe from harm and secure from wandering away from my salvation! *Believers are ENTERING THROUGH JESUS WHO IS MY DOOR TO LIFE.*

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD (10:11, 14) - Jesus is all I need to make it through life and get to my heavenly HOME, apart from Him is only aimless wandering. Jesus said I am the Good Shepherd who died; I have settled the issue of the unknown. I am your companion through life and death. Jesus gives us the perfect example of how to live and how to die! *Believers are FOLLOWING THE GOOD SHEPHERD WHO IS THE SAVIOR OF MY LIFE.*

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND LIFE (11:25) - Jesus is all I need to live the endless LIFE, but apart from Him is only endless dying. Jesus says I am the Resurrection, I am the Life so I have settled the issue of Hope. You can count on me, hope in me all through life and into death! *Believers are RESTING IN JESUS WHOSE RESURRECTION ASSURES ME ENDLESS LIFE.*

BECAUSE JESUS RESCUES US FROM THIS HIJACKED AND CRASHING WORLD. [1 Corinthians 15:50](#) I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. **Death [4] rescues us from the endlessness of this existence; it is the means by which those who love God finally are brought to Him.**

BECAUSE JESUS OFFERS US SOMETHING FAR BETTER. [Philippians 1:23](#) I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; **Paul was positively convinced that heaven was better than earth. He was itching to depart and to be with Christ, which "is far better." Even our heroic [5] attempts to live one day longer with respirators and other high-tech equipment would seem unnecessary if we could see what awaits us.**

BECAUSE JESUS MAKES EVEN DEATH A VICTORY. [1 Corinthians 15:55-58](#) "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. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Only on this side of the curtain is death**

our enemy. Just beyond the curtain the monster turns out to be our friend. The label "Death" is still on the bottle, but the contents are "Life Eternal. "

BECAUSE JESUS KNOWS WE ARE FRAGILE. [James 4: 13-15](#) Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." **Death is our friend because it reminds us that heaven is near. How near? As near as a heartbeat; as near as an auto accident; as near as a stray bullet; as near as a plane crash; as near as the next terrorist attack here or somewhere.**

BECAUSE JESUS PROMISES US A NEW HOME. [2 Corinthians 5: 1](#), 4 Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. **Death is not the end of the road; it is only a bend in the road. The road winds only through those paths through which Christ Himself has gone. This Travel Agent does not expect us to discover the trail for ourselves.**

BECAUSE JESUS MEETS US AT DEATH AND TAKES US HOME. [Psalm 23: 4](#), 6 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Often we say that Christ will meet us on the other side. That is true, of course, but misleading. Let us never forget that He walks with us on this side of the curtain and then guides us through the opening.

We will meet Him there, because we have met Him here.

The tomb is not an entrance to death, but to life.

The sepulcher is not an empty vault, but the doorway to heaven.

BECAUSE JESUS LEADS US IN TRIUMPH. [2 Corinthians 2: 14](#) But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. Little wonder the pagans said of the early church that they carried their dead as if in triumph! Aristides, a first-century Greek, marveled at the extraordinary success of Christianity and wrote to a friend,

"If any righteous man among the Christians passes from this world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God, and they escort his body with songs and thanksgiving as if he were setting out from one place to another nearby." And so it is. At death believers set out from one place to another. There is reason for sorrowing but "not as those who have no hope." Such confidence makes the unbelievers take notice that Christians die differently. Christ assures us, "Where I am, there you may be also" ([John 14: 3](#)).

Finally, AS OUR Resurrection and Life, Jesus makes even death a Triumph. Jesus transforms death [6] from a monster to a minister. What at first seems to box us in, frees us to go to God. Here are some words of comfort that will help us soften the blow.

JESUS ASSURES US THAT DEATH FOR HIS CHILDREN IS ONLY A DEPARTURE.
[Luke 9: 31](#)

appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. **That word *departure* in Greek is *exodus*, from which we get our word exit.**

JESUS ASSURES US THAT DEATH FOR HIS CHILDREN IS ONLY A RESTFUL SLEEP. [Luke 8: 52](#) Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead **but asleep.**"

- [John 11: 11](#) After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus **has fallen asleep**; but I am going there to wake him up."
- [Acts 7: 59-60](#) While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, **he fell asleep.**
- [1 Corinthians 15: 51](#) Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not **all sleep**, but we will all be changed—

JESUS ASSURES US THAT DEATH FOR HIS CHILDREN IS ONLY A COLLAPSING TENT. [2 Corinthians 5: 1](#) Now we know that if **the earthly tent** we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

JESUS ASSURES US THAT DEATH FOR HIS CHILDREN IS ONLY A TRANSFER TO PERMANENT HOUSING

- [John 14: 2-3](#) In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.
- [2 Corinthians 5: 6-8](#) Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 We live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.
- [Genesis 5: 24](#) Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

JESUS ASSURES US THAT DEATH FOR HIS CHILDREN IS ONLY A Good Grief

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

I for one would like to have dying grace long before I need it! But the famous English preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon says that death is the last enemy to be destroyed, and we should leave him to the last. He adds:

Brother, you do not want dying grace till dying moments. What would be the good of dying grace while you are yet alive? A boat will only be needful when you reach a river. Ask for living grace, and glorify Christ thereby, and then you shall have dying grace when the time comes. Your enemy is going to be destroyed but not today. ...Leave the final shock of arms till the last adversary advances, and meanwhile hold your place in the conflict. God will in due time help you to overcome your last enemy, but meanwhile see to it that you overcome the world, the flesh and the devil.

Our greatest [7] enemy is not death, but despair. Death is so limited. . .

It cannot cripple love,

It cannot shatter hope,

It cannot erode faith,

It cannot eat away peace,

It cannot destroy confidence,

It cannot kill friendship,

It cannot shut out memories,

It cannot silence courage,

It cannot invade the soul,

It cannot reduce eternal life,

It cannot quench the Spirit,

It cannot lessen the power of the resurrection.

...though the outward man perishes, yet the inner man is renewed day by day...we look not at the things which are seen, but at things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." II Cor 4:16 & 18

The Great Physician isn't expensive, but His work is priceless!

(Psalm 73:24);

When Corrie ten Boom was a girl, her first experience with death came after visiting the home of a neighbor who had just died. When she thought of the fact that her parents would die someday, her father comforted her by asking,

"When I go to Amsterdam, when do I give you your ticket?" "Just before we get on the train." "Exactly. Just so your heavenly Father will give you exactly what you need when we die-He'll give it to you just when you need it."

Dying grace does not mean that we will be free from sorrow, whether at our own impending death or the death of someone we love. Some Christians have mistakenly thought that grief demonstrates a lack of faith. Thus they have felt it necessary to maintain strength rather than deal honestly with a painful loss. (Hebrews 5:7);

As Christians, we live with the tension between what is "already ours" and the "not yet" of our experience. Paul said believers should look forward to Christ's return "that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Grief was expected, but it is different from the grief of the world. There is a difference between tears of hope and tears of hopelessness.

(Romans 12:15), Donald Grey Barnhouse, on the way home from the funeral of his first wife, was trying to think of some way of comforting his children. Just then a huge moving van passed by their car and its shadow swept over them. Instantly, Barnhouse asked, "Children, would you rather be run over by a truck or by its shadow?" The children replied, "Of course we'd prefer the shadow!" To which Barnhouse replied, "Two thousand years ago the truck of death ran over the Lord Jesus. . .now only the shadow of death can run over us!", Psalm 23:4, Death is the chariot our heavenly Father sends to bring us to Himself.

THE NEW [8] JERUSALEM

The dimensions of Heaven or as John describes it – the Heavenly New Jerusalem are given as a cube, fifteen hundred miles square. "And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal" (Revelation 21:16).

Just to picture this amazing city of New Jerusalem, if we laid this city on top of Tulsa as the center, it would stretch westward to Flagstaff, eastward to Charlotte, northward to Minneapolis, and southward to Brownsville – upwards for 1500 miles.

Just for comparison, there is enough room in the Heavenly New Jerusalem for all 6 billion humans alive to have a space equivalent to 1000 twin tower WTCs! Yes God has made a wonderful place full of rooms, but so few want to go there and stay with Him! Instead most are heading away from the Palace of God and are surging toward the garbage dump of the Universe Jesus called Gehenna.

So if we believe what Jesus promised, **heaven will be composed of 396,000 stories** (at twenty feet per story) each having an area as big as one half the size of the United States! Divide that into separate condominiums, and you have plenty of room for all who have been redeemed by God since the beginning of time. The Old Testament saints-Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-they will be there. Then we think of the New Testament apostles and all the redeemed throughout two thousand years of church history-heaven will be the home for all of them. Unfortunately, however, the majority of the world's population will likely not be there. Heaven, as Christ explained, is a special place for special people.

Jesus declares that death is like sleep [9] , not soul sleep but peaceful sleep.

1. **First, sleep is perfectly harmless. In sleep there is nothing to fear, but much to be thankful for.** It is a friend and not a foe. So, for the Christian, is it with death. Said David, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death (1 Cor. 15:56, 57), and has no more power to hurt one of Christ's redeemed, than a hornet has after its sting has been extracted.

2. **Second, sleep comes as a welcome relief after the sorrows and toils of the day.** As the wise man declared, "The sleep of a laboring man is *sweet*"(Eccl. 5:12). Death, for the believer, is simply the portal through which he passes from this scene of sin and turmoil to the Paradise of bliss. As 1 Cor. 3:22 tells us, "death" is *ours*. Sleep is a merciful provision, not appreciated nearly as much as it should be. The writer learned this lesson some years ago when he witnessed a close friend, who as suffering severely, seeking sleep in vain for over a week. Equally merciful is death for one who is prepared. Try to imagine David still alive on earth after three thousand years! Such a protracted existence in this world of sin and suffering would probably have driven him hopelessly crazy long ago. How thankful we ought to be that we have not the longevity of the antediluvians!

3. **Third, in sleep we lie down to rise again. It is of but brief duration; a few hours snatched from our working time, then to awaken and rise to a new day.** In like manner, death is but a sleep and resurrection, an awakening. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). On the glorious resurrection morn the dead in Christ shall be awakened, to sleep no more, but live forever throughout the perfect Day of God.

4. **Fourth, sleep is a time of rest. The work of the day is exchanged for sweet repose.** This is what death means for the Christian: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors" (Rev. 14:13). This applies only to the "intermediate state", between death and resurrection. When we receive our glorified bodies there will be new ministries for us to engage in, for it is written, "His servants shall serve him" (Rev. 22:3).

5. **Fifth, sleep shuts out the sorrows of life. In sleep we are mercifully unconscious of the things which exercise us throughout the day.** The repose of night affords us welcome relief from that which troubles us by day. It is so in death. Not that the believer is unconscious, but that those in paradise know nothing of the tears which are shed on earth. Scripture seems to indicate that there is one exception in their knowledge of what is transpiring down here: the salvation of sinners is heralded on high (Luke 15:7, 10).

6. **Sixth, one reason perhaps why death is likened to a sleep is to emphasize the ease with which the Lord will quicken us.** To raise the dead (impossible as it appears to the skeptic) will be simpler to Him than arousing a sleeper. It is a singular thing that nothing so quickly awakens one as being addressed by the voice. So we are told "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice" (John 5:28).

7. **Seventh, sleep is a time when the body is fitted for the duties of the morrow.** When the awakened sleeper arises he is refreshed and invigorated, and ready for what lies before him. In like manner, the resurrected believer will be endued with a new power. The limitations of his mortal body will no longer exist. That which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power. But O how vastly different is it for one who dies in his sins. The very reverse of what we have said above will be his portion. Instead of death delivering him fro the sorrows of this life, it shall but introduce him to that fearful place whose air is filled with weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. It is true that sinners too shall be raised from the dead, but it will be unto "the resurrection of damnation." It will be in order to receive bodies in which they will suffer still more acutely the eternal torments of the Lake of Fire. To all such, death will be far worse than the most frightful nightmare. And O unsaved reader, there is but a step between thee and death. Your life hangs by a slender thread, which may snap at any moment. Be warned then, ere it is to late. Flee, eve now, from the wrath to come. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, for there is no hope beyond the grave.

God sent His son—they called Him Jesus; He came to love, heal and forgive; He lived and died to buy my pardon; an empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.

And then one day I'll cross the river; I'll fight life's final war with pain; and then, as death gives way to victory, I'll see the lights of glory—and I'll know He lives.

Chorus: Because He lives I can face tomorrow, because He lives all fear is gone; because I know He holds the future and life is worth the living—just because He lives.

- [1] John MacArthur, *Saved Without A Doubt*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books) 1992.
- [2] Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Hebrews Vol 1&2—An Anchor for the Soul*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1998, c1993.
- [3] Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1997, 141-143.
- [4] Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1997, 62-67.
- [5] Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1997, 62-67.
- [6] Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1997, 46-60.
- [7] From Pat Bartlett to Bill Robinson May, 2000 in Tulsa.
- [8] Paraphrased from portions of Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1997, 81-95.
- [9] Derived from Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John, Volume 3*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1945, p. 31-33.

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