

## LIFE-AND-DEATH LESSONS YOU NEED TO LEARN – April 19, 2020

An unpopular subject has become “popular” in the past month, and that’s death. What I mean by this is that every day we hear these shocking and staggering death totals due to this flu virus, this COVID-19, which has now affected 184 countries in the world. And as of today, close to 36,000 people have died due to this coronavirus, which is about 12 times the amount of people who died in 9/11. Vietnam war – 58,220 dead

Death is sad and sobering, and is not a pleasant subject, not something we like to think about. If it comes up, we usually try to think about something else. But you know, death literally takes place all the time. It happens every minute of every day all over the world.

- In this country, 7,700 people, on the average, die every day. That’s over 320 people / hour, about 5 people / minute. That’s a lot of people. In the year 2017, according to the CDC, 647,457 people died of heart disease, 599,108 of cancer, 169,936 of accidents, 160,201 of respiratory problems, 70,237 of drug overdose, 55,672 of influenza, 47,173 of suicides, etc.

The point is that death happens all the time and for all kinds of reasons. It keeps happening in our cities, our country, our world. Now as I said, we don’t like to think about it, but yet there are times when we do think about it more. Here are some examples:

- A person dies suddenly and unexpectedly. He is alive one day and dead the next day.
- A person dies accidentally because of a car crash, a drowning, or a tree falls on his house.
- A person dies because of some calamity or disaster, like a war, a tornado, a hurricane or an earthquake, or in this present situation, because of this flu virus, this COVID-19.
- A person dies who is young - they are just a baby or a teenager or someone who is in his 20’s, 30’s, 40’s or 50’s – anyone who dies in these age brackets is young.

But the time we really think about death is when we know someone personally and they die - someone we are close to, someone in our family, someone in our church, someone at our workplace, or a next-door neighbor. And the closer we are to someone, the more we know someone, the harder it’s going to be, the sadder it’s going to be, the more we’re going to grieve, the more we’re going to feel the loss. And when this happens, God wants to comfort you, to draw you close to Himself, and give you all the grace you need to trust Him and grieve rightly.

God wants you to know that He is sovereign over the death of every person. God has ordained every person’s life, from beginning to end, from the moment they are born to the moment they die. (Cemetery - birthdate – death-date. Psalm 139:16, Acts 17:26). And God is sovereign over the death of people as it relates to you personally. What I mean is that God allows people to die who you are close to, so you are then affected by their death; and I’m sure every one of you have been touched by someone’s death.

As Christians, God wants us to be focused on spiritual realities, on our soul, our destiny in life, and about the souls and destinies of others. Luke 12:20  
- In Luke 13:1-5, we read about some people who had been brutally murdered by Pilate and about 18 others who died in an accident when a tower fell on them. These people present with Jesus were thinking that these other people died because they were bad sinners, were really guilty, and were worse than the average person, and that's why God had them die in this horrific way, this visible and shameful way. These people with Jesus were thinking they were better, more righteous, than those who had died.

But Jesus knew what they were thinking and that their thinking was wrong and so He uses this story about the deaths of people to show them that they were sinners, and because they were sinners, that they deserved to die, and deserved to perish. And so Jesus says to them, *"Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."* And He says it twice for emphasis, for He knew it was a very important lesson they needed to learn.

Now let me share some things about this passage:

1. Now in this verse, the word *"you"* is in the plural, and so He was talking to everyone who was with Him, and in reality, to all mankind, to every single person, to you and me.
2. This whole context is about sin and death, about the sin and death of people. But it's more than that, which leads us to the 3<sup>rd</sup> point.
3. Unbelievers, sinners who don't repent don't just die, they perish. This word perish can refer to physical death, but in the N.T. it is also used to refer to eternal death, to eternal separation from God. But it's more than that. Vines says, *"(perish) signifies to destroy utterly... the idea is not extinction, but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being."* John 3:16 - *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have receive eternal life."* John 10:27-28 - *"My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish."* 2 Peter 3:9. You have two options, to receive eternal life or perish.  
- And so, Jesus is using this word perish not to just mean physical death, but eternal death, eternal separation from God and, with that, eternal punishment. Matt. 24:41, 46

I need to explain this some more: In Ez. 18:20, it says, *"The soul that sins will die."* Eph 2:1 says, *"You were spiritually dead in your sins."* Rom 6:23 says, *"The wages of sin is death."* The person who sins against God spiritually dies, is spiritually separated from God while he lives on this earth, and does not have a relationship with Him, is not a child of God. And the person who sins will also physically die, and this means every person, even Christians, will physically die sooner or later, unless, of course, they are raptured.

The result of sin is both spiritual death and physical death. And the person who is spiritually dead and doesn't get right with God during his life on earth, doesn't repent of his sins, will perish, that is, will experience eternal death, be eternally separated from God, and be ruined, will suffer eternal punishment. 2 Thess. 1:9-10

There are 3 kinds of death. 1 - Sin results in spiritual death, in that we are separated from God. 2 - Sin results in physical death, in that the soul is separated from the body. 3 - Sin that is not repented of during a person's life on earth, results in eternal death, the eternal separation of a sinner from God, and with that, eternal punishment by God.

Every person on earth is a sinner and is spiritually dead, and if he doesn't repent and get saved when he is on earth, if he isn't born again of the Spirit, and receive God's spiritual life, and then physically dies, then he is spiritually and eternally dead. That is, he perishes, and without question, to perish, to be separated from God, to be punished in hell forever and ever, is the worst thing that can happen to a person. In a loving and truthful way, Jesus tells these people and all people that they need to repent of their sins and believe in Christ before it's too late, before they physically die. Heb. 10:31

Jesus Christ is the only answer to man's problem of sin and death. That's because He died on the cross to pay for the sins of people, and all who repent of their sins and believe that He died for them and paid for their sins are forgiven, and are no longer spiritually dead, but are spiritually alive, and have received eternal life. (Rom. 5:8, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Peter 3:18) If you are not saved, know that God wants a person's death to wake you up to your need to repent of your sins before your physical death. If you do that, then you will be forgiven, receive eternal life, and become a child of God, and you will not perish, but go to heaven after you die. You will be with God and Jesus Christ and all the other believers from all time and have a perfect, glorious, and most blessed future in heaven. Psalm 16:11

If you are saved, here is how you should think about death, and life in Jesus Christ.

- \* Know that God is sovereign over every person's death. Luke 12:20, Acts 5:11, Acts 12
- \* Know that God wants to forgive people who are spiritually dead in their sins, but if they don't repent, He will judge them, and they will be eternally dead forever.
- \* If you are saved, then be thankful you were given spiritual life, and that you will receive physical life, that is, be given a glorified body, when Christ returns.
- \* Pray for the lost, those spiritually dead, and as God leads, share the gospel with them.
- \* Don't overly grieve when believing loved ones die, for you will be with them in heaven.
- \* Those who are alive on earth still have work that God wants them to do.
- \* Know that there is going to be a lot more death on this earth before Christ returns, and that's because we are living in the end-times. And so, when death happens, don't be too surprised or too sad. Know that God is sovereign, and keep loving and serving Him, and keep looking for Jesus to return to rapture the church and take her to heaven.
- \* Know that it won't be long before you die, or are raptured, and go to heaven. Heb. 10:37  
Philippians 3:20-21 – *“Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”*

For me it started when I was 7, and my father died. Then in the next 14 years there were two grandfathers, two uncles and a high school classmate, all who suddenly and unexpectedly died. And these deaths had an effect on me, and got me thinking about life, about my relationship with God, and what happens after I die.

I assume all of you have been affected, and sometimes greatly so, by the death of another person. You see, God wants you to be thinking about life and death. That is, God wants the deaths of other people, particularly those close to you, to have a positive effect on your life. God wants you to be sobered up, He wants you to be thinking about Himself and who He is and how He wants you to relate to Him. God wants you to know that life is short, and to be thinking about your purpose in life, and about heavenly and spiritual things.

- Ecclesiastes 7:2-4 – *“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man... the mind of the wise is in the house of the mourning, while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.”*

Now as people, we tend to think a lot about physical things, earthly things, temporal things, and God wants us to be thinking about spiritual things, heavenly things, and eternal things. We live in world that focuses on things related to the body, the physical, the external.

- We think about our jobs, our paychecks, our money.
- We think about our nights, our weekends, and our vacation times.
- We think about foods, supplements, and vitamins, and going out to restaurants.
- We think about clothes, shoes, hairdos and cosmetics.
- We think about our looks, our health, medicines and how we are physically feeling.
- We think about lifting weights, and running, swimming, biking, and getting in shape.
- We think about cars, houses, furnishings, computers and smart phones.

None of these things are bad in and of themselves, but we often think too much about the things of the world, about the things we need and the things we want. And God warns us about this. In Luke 12:19, we read about this sinner who said to himself, *“Take it easy, eat, drink and be merry.”* Jesus said to his disciples, *“What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?”* Matt. 16:26. 1 John 2:15-17 - *“Do not love the world or the things in the world.”* Col. 3:1-2 - *“Set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on earth.”*

The point I am making is that God wants us to be awake and alert to spiritual realities, to be thinking about them, and one way He does this is by a person’s death. I really believe this is one of God’s main purposes for the coronavirus, to get your mind on Him. While people are concerned about their jobs, while people are concerned if they have enough money, food or supplies, God wants us to be concerned about His glory, His kingdom. *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.”* Matt. 6:33