

THE BREVITY OF LIFE

TEXT: PROVERBS 27:1; JAMES 4:13-17

INTRODUCTION:

1. Last night many of us went to Long Beach, and we heard a good Bible message by bro Josh.
2. His text was James 4:14, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."
3. James 4:14 and Proverbs 27:1, and many other Scriptures remind us of the brevity of life.
4. Psalm 39:4 says, "LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am."
5. Job said, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope." (Job 7:6).
6. Bildad responded to Job and said, "Our days upon earth are a shadow" (Job 8:9).
7. Then Job answered Bildad and said, "Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good... "Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness" (Job 9:25; 10:20-22).
8. Job also said, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not" (Job 14:1, 2).
9. The Psalmist said, "My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass" (Psalm 102:11).
10. The woman of Tekoah said to King David, "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again" (II Samuel 14:14).
11. Asaph said the LORD remembered "that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again" (Psalm 78:39).
12. David said to Jonathan, "There is but a step between me and death" (I Samuel 20:3).
13. Later on, David said, "Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding" (I Chronicles 29:15).

14. These Scriptures all emphasize the brevity of life. Last Wednesday evening, one of our members came to prayer meeting and he looked fine. The next day he was sitting in a chair in his living room and he fell asleep.
15. He never woke up.
16. Brother Josh said last year a Baptist church in Dominican Republic brought their youth group to the beach for Neighborhood Bible Time.
17. A young girl ran into the ocean to try and retrieve a ball, and she drowned. The waves dragged her off into the deep.
18. According to the Bible, none of us is guaranteed tomorrow.
19. In Luke 12, our Lord told the parable of the "certain rich man" (Luke 12:16-21).
20. The Lord said that rich man was a fool. And many people today are like that foolish rich man -- they are laying up treasures for themselves here on earth, and they do not even think about God.

I. THE DANGER OF PRESUMPTION

II. THE DANGER OF PROCRASTINATION

III. THE DANGER OF DAMNATION

I. THE DANGER OF PRESUMPTION

1. Regarding Proverbs 27:1, Matthew Henry said, "This does not forbid preparing for tomorrow, but presuming upon tomorrow."
2. John Phillips is a Baptist preacher from Wales. He grew up in a coal-mining area. In the coal mines, the miners pulled out a lot of slag along with the coal. The slag was a waste substance that no one had any use for.
3. Phillips says back in 1968, a big rainfall undermined a huge slag heap, and all the slag came hurtling down on top of a school house. About 116 boys and girls, along with their teachers, were buried alive underneath the slag.
4. Miners rushed over and tried digging them out but it was too late.
5. On one of the tombstones, heartbroken parents wrote these words:

Some day we'll understand it,
 And know the reason why;
 The saddest thing of all is,
 We never said "Good-bye."

II. THE DANGER OF PROCRASTINATION

1. An English poet by the name of Edward Young, said, "Procrastination is the thief of time."
2. Many years ago, Jonathan Edwards preached a message from Proverbs 27:1 entitled, "Procrastination, or The Sin and Folly of Depending on Future Time."
3. It is indeed foolish and sinful to depend upon something you do not have.
4. People often say, "I have all the time I need," or "I have all the time in the world," etc.
5. But that is not true. That young girl who ran into the water to get her ball probably thought she had plenty of time.
6. But none of us is guaranteed tomorrow.
7. It is foolish to depend upon something that does not belong to us. Time is a gift from God, and sadly, most people abuse this gift.
8. People say they'll get around to it by and by, forgetting that the street of By-and-By leads to the house of Never.
9. Years ago I came across a little card. On one side it said, "You may tie your shoes this morning, but the undertaker may untie them tonight."
10. The other side of the card said, "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12).
11. Someone said, "Young people talk about what they are doing; old people talk about what they have done; and fools talk about what they wish to do."
12. William Arnot said, "To count on tomorrow so as to neglect the duty of today is in many respects the greatest practical error among men...Whether the work in hand pertain to small matters or great, -- to the sowing of a field or the redemption of a soul, -- for every one who deliberately resolves not to do it, a hundred tread the same path, and suffer the same loss at last, who only postpone the work today with the intention of performing it tomorrow" (*Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*).
13. Remember, three things come not back;

The arrow sent upon its track --
 It will not swerve, it will not stay
 Its speed; it flies to wound, or slay;
 The spoken word so soon forgot
 By thee; but it has perished not;
 In other hearts 'tis living still,
 And doing work for good or ill.
 And the lost opportunity
 That cometh back no more to thee --
 In vain thou weapest, in vain dost yearn,
 Those three will never more return.

Translated from Arabic

III. THE DANGER OF DAMNATION (Pro. 29:1).

1. Procrastination is not only the thief of time; it is also the thief of souls! The Bible says, "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7; cf. Heb. 3:8, 15; Psalm 95:8).
2. "Today (NOT tomorrow) if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." I have talked to scores of sinners who told me they intended to get saved "later on." I cannot recall even one who ever did get saved, and I know quite a few who died and went out into eternity without Christ -- lost for all eternity!
3. Spurgeon said, "Let the careless and thoughtless here remember that they do not know what a day may bring forth. Tomorrow it may not be that grand party to which you are intending to go; tomorrow it may not be that sweet sin of which your evil nature is thinking. Tomorrow may see you on a sick-bed, tomorrow may see you on your dying bed. Tomorrow, worst of all, may see you in hell! O sinner, what a state to live in, to be in daily jeopardy of eternal ruin, to have the wrath of God, who is always angry with the wicked, abiding on you; and not to know but that tomorrow you may be where you can find no escape, no hope, no comfort! Tomorrow in eternity! Tomorrow banished from his presence for ever! Tomorrow to have that awful sentence thrilling in your soul, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels'" ("Cheer for Despondency," published Feb. 3, 1910).
4. First Samuel 18:7 says the women sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." May I say that if wicked unbelief has slain its thousands, then foolish procrastination has slain its ten thousands!
5. Pharaoh procrastinated, and soon the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, including his own son.
6. And then Pharaoh continued to procrastinate, and soon he and his entire army drowned in the Red Sea.
7. Felix procrastinated. Acts 24:25 says "Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."
8. King Agrippa was another famous procrastinator. He said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).
9. We read in Matthew 25 about the foolish virgins being shut out of the marriage supper. Matthew 25:10 and 11 says, "The door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us."

10. But it was too late for them. In hell there are many heathens and atheists and liars and adulterers and drunkards. But I believe the largest group in hell will be the procrastinators!

11. Alfred, Lord Tennyson wrote:

Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill!

Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.

Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

No light had we: for that we do repent;

And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.

Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

No light: so late! and dark and chill the night!

O, let us in, that we may find the light!

Too late, too late: ye cannot enter now.

Have we not heard the Bridegroom is so sweet?

O, let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!

No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now."

CONCLUSION:

The old song, "The Great Judgment Morning"...

The soul that had put off salvation,

"Not tonight; I'll get saved by and by,

No time now to think of religion!"

At last they had found time to die.

And, oh, what a weeping and wailing,

As the lost were told of their fate;

They cried for the rocks and the mountains,

They prayed, but their prayer was too late.