

## ***“Facing the Last Enemy”***

Hebrews 9:27-28; 1 Corinthians 15:26.

Don Maurer

September 8, 2023

**Don Maurer:** Let me pray for us here before we begin. Let’s have a word of prayer. Someone came in; good morning.

**Ron Baling:** Good morning.

**Don:** Okay. Let us pray. Our great and gracious God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we come before You today with praise and thanksgiving. You are our God, we are Your people. We belong to You through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for giving us a good night’s sleep and sustaining us throughout the night. We thank You that we were able to arrive here safely in a free country, where we are free to gather as Your people. We pray, Father, that You would instruct us now in Your word. We thank You for Your word. It is our only anchor; it is our only hope. And we pray, O Holy Spirit, that You would instruct us in Your word this morning.

Our Father, we continue to lift up Tab to you, and the ongoing health issues and struggles that she has. We pray, Father, for her upcoming surgery, that Lord, You would do wonders, that You would see fit to heal her, Father, if that be Your will. We pray for Jeff, Lord, as he constantly takes care of her.

Father, we continue to lift up Bruce Bickel to you. We pray, Father, that You would sustain him in his Parkinson’s. Father, we pray for our friend and brother Bob Parker. Lord, I understand that he’s not doing well. He may not have too long in this world before You take him home. Father, however You choose to work in his life, whether You heal him or take him home, we give You praise and we give You glory.

Father, we pray for Charlie. We ask, heavenly Father, that whatever it is that he’s going through, whatever he had to have the procedure for yesterday, Lord, that You would continue to sustain him, that You would keep him well, and that the doctors would be able to find out, Lord, what is causing his problems.

And so Father, we come before You today, asking that You would instruct us on this very, very vital and important topic of death and how we handle it. And it’s in Jesus’ name that we pray. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Don:** Well, it’s very interesting how the providence of God works. I talked to Ted last week and I talked to him about the topic that I’m going to do. The title is borrowed (or stolen) from a book that I would highly recommend. It’s a new book published by Ligonier. I gave it to Gary for the library. It’s called *Facing the Last Enemy*.

Now I told Ted, and I was talking to Ted last week before I knew what Mike was going to be teaching on. So wouldn’t you know it? Last week Mike teaches on the resurrection and victory in Christ. And this week I’m going to be teaching on death. So we’re kind of reversing the order of things a little bit, right? God’s ways are not our ways; it’s very interesting.

I am not typically a topic teacher. I’m like John MacArthur. He said that he preaches one topic a year and then repents after he does it. (*Laughter*) I’m more into expository teaching or preaching or exhortation.

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But this topic is admittedly not a popular one. It’s rather morbid (no pun intended.) The word “morbid” comes from the Latin, meaning “death.” We get morbid, morgue, mortuary, etc. I’m going to be teaching this same topic in Sunday school at my church a week from Sunday, and I’m wondering if anyone will show up. You know, it’s certainly a depressing topic.

But I believe it’s something that needs to be addressed. It’s something, barring the return of Christ before that, that we’re all going to experience if Christ tarries. The word of God certainly doesn’t shy away from the topic; it introduces it in the opening pages of Genesis. And it’s something for some of us who are older and who are closer to the event than others. But it is something that we will all have to face if Christ doesn’t return first.

All right. And so what I’m going to do is read a few Scriptures. You don’t have to turn to them because they are very short Scriptures. I’m not going to be going verse by verse and examining them in detail. There’s a lot to cover here. It may be that I might have to do a Part 2 here; we’ll see how far we get. But questions and comments are always welcome. But I want to read Hebrews 9:27-28 and 1 Corinthians 15 verse 26.

Hebrews 9:27-28 says: *“And as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bare the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”*

And then 1 Corinthians 15:26: *“And the last enemy to be destroyed is death.”* This is the word of the Lord.

**Brave Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Don:** Amen. Okay, I want to start out with *the reality of death*, and I want to spend some time on this. You know, we see and experience it all the time, whether it be the deaths of loved ones, the deaths of animals and pets, what we see on TV with all the shootings that we hear about seemingly every day, war, etc. As Mike Davis said last week, there was a mutual friend of ours who went on vacation with her husband. He returned, she didn’t. She went home to be with the Lord. Humanly speaking that would obviously be the way to go, at least the way we think; to be at the place where they say happiness lives one minute and then in the arms of Jesus the next. But she died, as we all will.

I don’t want to bore you. But in my own experience the first death I was affected by was one that many of you will remember as well: November 22, 1963. I was in school and I found out that President Kennedy had been assassinated.

In 1964, in the space of six months, three relatives of my mother died, two months apart each: my great-grandmother, two months later my mom’s uncle, and then two months later my mother’s mother, my grandmother on my mother’s side, four days before Christmas in 1964.

On May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1967,--Mother’s Day—my six-year-old cousin’s heart was attacked by a virus. He suffered a sudden heart attack and died at my house; actually it was on the way to the hospital. Two months later to the day, a teenage neighbor drowned in his backyard swimming pool. And then my dad died of cancer at the age of fifty. And of course many of you know that my mom died of dementia and COPD.

And then there were my own close encounters. On March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021, I was walking as I usually do in my neighborhood. I was hit by a car and I was knocked to the ground. I

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was dazed and I thought, Lord, is this it? I was hospitalized and examined. And the doctors, in their own words, said it was miraculous; I was fine.

A humorous side note. My brother and sister and I went out to dinner afterwards. My sister sent her kids pictures of me eating and drinking a chocolate milkshake. And my nephew replied, “That’s Uncle Donnie! In the hospital one minute and drinking a chocolate milkshake the next.” (*Laughter*)

Nine months later, three days before Christmas, I had chest pains and pain in my left wrist. I heard that is not good. I was alone at the time, and so my brother had me call 911. They came and they diagnosed that I had a mild heart attack. I was sent to the hospital and had a stent put in. By God’s grace I was able to be home for Christmas.

But you know, these incidents brought home to me the fact that death is real. This isn’t just something that we hear that’s theoretical, or that we hear about on the news that’s not affecting me or anyone that I know anyway. It brought home to me the fact that I am mortal; I am going to die at some point. It brought home to me Psalm 90, a Psalm that talks a lot about death, particularly verse 12:

“LORD, teach us to number our days,  
That we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

You know, I and we dare not take life for granted. It’s so easy to do when things are going well for us, isn’t it? But death stares us in the face.

Now how does the world and our culture respond to death? And don’t cheat; I know that there are answers on your handout. How would you say that the world and our culture respond to death?

**Gary Craig:** They ignore it and say it doesn’t happen.

**Don:** Right, exactly, I have three words in the handout: *distraction*, *denial*, and what I’ll call *circumvention*. That might be a word that I invented, but I’ll explain it later. (*Laughter*)

But you know, we have distractions, don’t we? We have lots of things that distract us from death. And that’s nothing new, but there are more of them these days: NetFlicks, YouTube, social media. For me it’s Internet radio and this new contraption, this new phone here. I mean, could anybody have ever imagined that we would be talking to phones and talking to machines? And my phone does actually talk back to me. I love Internet radio and music to listen to and everything. We have all kinds of entertainment and stuff to distract us from the idea and the reality of death. Neil Postman wrote a book several decades ago called *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, and that’s happening more and more.

Take Jesus’ parable of the rich fool, right? “I’ll just build bigger and bigger barns. Eat, drink and be merry; enjoy yourself.” And all of a sudden he dies and has to give an account to God.

And then another way that we deal with death in our culture is denial. Christian Science is the classical expression of this; they say that death is just an illusion. John MacArthur says that Christian Science is like the cereal Grapenuts. I don’t know if they still make Grapenuts, but—

**Brave Man:** Yeah, they do.

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**Don:** But Grapenuts is neither grapes nor nuts. (*Laughter*) And Christian Science is neither Christian nor scientific. (*Laughter*) And the more secular as a culture that we become, the more we just don’t want to deal with death.

It’s amazing; the book I’m getting a lot of my teaching from talks about this. Funerals or memorial services are now called “celebration of life” services. And the favorite songs of people are no longer hymns like “Amazing Grace” or “Rock of Ages,” or “In the Garden,” but at least in the U.K.—and it’s probably similar here, too—the three favorite songs of people sung at these events are “My Way,” which was my dad’s favorite song, “Time to Say Goodbye,” and Jeff’s favorite song (next to “Dancing Queen,” of course), (*Laughter*), “Over the Rainbow.” By the way, for those of you who don’t know, Jeff can’t stand “Dancing Queen”; he doesn’t like Abba. (*Laughter*)

Anyway, we keep death at arm’s length, don’t we? We don’t experience it the way that our parents and grandparents used to. People used to die at home. There was a lot of infant mortality. So it’s kind of out of sight, out of mind; it’s removed from us.

And then of course, what do our tombstones say? Ted and I talked a little bit about this last week? “Together forever.” “Always in my heart.” Yeah, right. We’re not going to be remembered five or ten years from now. I mean, sure; occasionally somebody might say, “Don used to say this,” or whatever. It’s just sentimentality; there’s no substance to it. It’s like the book of Ecclesiastes: “*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*” And a lot of songs express this: “Dust in the Wind.” And this is the way it is, apart from the good news of Christianity.

And then added to this, the subject of death is not preached a whole lot in many churches, except at funerals. Preaching on the subject of death doesn’t get people in the doors. It’s like preaching on hell; that doesn’t get people in the doors either.

And so there’s distraction, there’s denial, and then there’s a word that I came up with: *circumvention*. Some people, believe it or not, are trying to circumvent or change the way we are wired as human beings so that we can, according to some, live forever. I’m not kidding. You know, this used to be the stuff of science fiction. But people are actually seriously considering this in the age of AI—artificial intelligence. I don’t know if John Gratner is here this morning.

**John Gratner:** I am.

**Don:** Okay. Well, he sent me a YouTube video, interviewing the British Christian mathematician and scientist John Lennox. John was talking about people proposing something called trans-humanism. According to one author that Lennox mentions, with AI he believes that people can be turned into gods and made immortal.

Does that sound familiar? Genesis 3, right? “*You shall not surely die. ... You will be as God, knowing good and evil.*” It’s as old as Eden. It’s as old as the tower of Babel.

And it’s as modern as Woodstock. I remember, of course, the Woodstock phenomenon in 1969 and the song in 1970 by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. There was also another version later by Matthew’s Southern Comfort which is more melancholy and contemplative and reflective. It’s in the key of g minor. Everyone knew that, right?

**Mike Davis:** Oh yeah, right. (*Laughter*)

**Don:** Of course, okay. But the refrain is very interesting. Remember the words of the refrain of that song?

“*We are star dust; we are golden.*”

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*We are billion-year-old carbon.”*

Isn't it interesting what they say there; there's some Darwinism there. Does anybody remember the next line?

**Ted Wood:** No.

**Rich Clark:** “*And we've got to get ourselves back to the garden.*”

**Don:** Yes. “*And we've got to get ourselves back to the garden.*” Isn't that interesting? You know, there's a mixture of Darwinism and hopelessness there. Yet “*We've got to get ourselves back to the garden.*” We've got to get ourselves to the place where we are autonomous and we are immortal. And of course the way that the people at Woodstock proposed to do it was through sex, drugs, and rock and roll.

So this is something that is as old as Eden; it's as old as Babel, at the tower of Babel, when people decided to do it their way and not God's way.

**Gary:** You know, Don, that thing about AI and uploading your brain into gear and all that?

**Don:** Yes.

**Gary:** That has some Pittsburgh roots. Somebody had written a book. It was written by Hans Morobic years ago, who is the head of the AI department at CMU.

**Don:** Wow!

**Gary:** He promoted that idea. I have a copy of the book at home someplace.

**Don:** Okay. I'll tell you what: people have some very interesting ideas out there. And I'll be alluding a little bit later on to something else that John Lennox said that's absolutely remarkable. I would highly recommend that you look that up on YouTube and watch it.

Okay. Now we come to *what does the Bible say about that?* After all, that is our only guide, that is our only anchor. The Bible is our only hope in this subject. And it doesn't shy away from death; it acknowledges it from the beginning. We know the account in Genesis 2 and 3. God said to Adam, “*You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, for in the day you eat of it, you will surely die.*”

All right. Now modern man says, “Oh, this is just a fairy tale.” Elton John and Pat Benatar say that this is just a story for children. Okay, then how is it that death entered the world? The only other alternative is that it has always existed, which of course is what evolution teaches: survival of the fittest, etc., and of course with disastrous results with the blood bath of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, going into the 21<sup>st</sup>.

I would imagine that God elaborated to Adam what that would be like, what death would consist of. And of course Adam and Eve saw what it would consist of when God clothed them with animal skins. They see what death is like, and that these animals were substituted for them.

We know that Adam and Eve, but primarily Adam, our federal head, disobeyed and death entered the world. In Genesis chapter 5, the first genealogy, which some people call the Begatitudes, (*Laughter*), from the old King James language, the constant refrain is what? “*And he died.*” “*And he died.*” “*And he died.*” There are very long life spans—900 years or so. They're gradually reduced after the Flood, to where now of course we live 70 or 80 years—some less, some more—but that's a general thing. Psalm 90 verse 10 says that. And it says, “*Yet their span is toil and trouble.*” Every pain, every sickness, every sadness, every disappointment, every hardship that we have is a preview of the

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inevitable reality of death. And that’s something that secularism and science just can’t explain.

Okay, *what does the Bible mean by death?* There are three ways in which the Bible talks about death. There is obviously physical death, but not just that; we talked about that. Can someone look up Ephesians 2, verses 1-3 for us? This passage talks about a second way in which the Bible talks about death. Whoever has it can read it.

**Don Rimbey:** I have it, Don.

**Don Maurer:** Okay, thank you.

**Don Rimbey:** Ephesians 2:1-3.

**Don Maurer:** Yes.

**Don Rimbey:** *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world, and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”* Do you want me to read 3 also?

**Don Maurer:** Yes.

**Don Rimbey:** *“All of us lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”*

**Don Maurer:** Okay. Thank you, Don. All right. And so the Bible talks about the fact that those outside of Christ—and this is talking about loved ones that you may know, coworkers that you may know, friends, neighbors, also those who promote false religions, corrupt officials, criminals, etc.—all outside of Christ are dead in trespasses and sins, walking corpses, if you will. They are, as Ephesians 2:12 says, *“without hope and without God in the world.”* Imagine being without hope, without any hope at all, which is more and more what our culture is sinking into for sure.

Adam and Eve died spiritually immediately, the very moment they sinned, the very moment they fell. I’ve often wondered when God said to Adam, *“The day that you eat of it you will surely die.”* Well Adam didn’t die; he lived for 930 years. Well, the death process started to occur. They died spiritually; they lost communion with God the very instant that they sinned.

Death, according to the word of God, is not just a natural part of the cycle of life, as so many in our culture would have us believe. It’s not just a result of the survival of the fittest; it’s an enemy. As I read in 1 Corinthians 9:26, it’s an enemy. It’s *“the last enemy to be destroyed,”* but it’s an enemy nonetheless. It causes grief, it causes loss. It caused even our Savior to weep at the tomb of Lazarus. So it’s okay for us to grieve.

And then thirdly, *the second death.* Would someone read Revelation 21 verse 8 for us? In Revelation 21 verse 8 the Bible talks about a third instance of death, and that is for those who are outside of Christ at the last day.

**Don Bishop:** *“But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”*

**Don Maurer:** Okay. So that is the second death. And so the Bible teaches that death is not a cessation of consciousness. A lot of people would like to believe that. As for atheists and those who are skeptics, that’s the thing they hope for. They don’t want to give an

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account to God. I have a neighbor who is very adamant about that. But no, death is not the cessation of consciousness. In that sense, those in hell would have eternal life.

The word *bios*, from which we get our word *biology*, in the Greek means consciousness. But eternal life consists of the quality of life—*zoe* in the Greek, which we are all looking forward to as believers. And I’ll have more to say about that later.

Okay. Now we come to *why is there death?* It’s not because of the survival of the fittest. The short answer is sin; it’s because of sin. Romans 6:23 says: “*The wages of sin is death.*” And I’m going to deliberately not quote the second part of the verse; I’ll save that for later.

School children way back when, when there was sanity in education, started every school day with this maxim: “*In Adam’s fall we sinned all.*” That is why we sin. We’re not sinners because we sin; we sin because we’re sinners. It’s in our very nature. We are born sinners, born dead in trespasses and sins. We’ve inherited that from Adam, our federal head.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 says: “*By one man came death,*” and “*In Adam all die.*” And in Romans 5:12 says the same thing, that “sin entered the world through Adam, and death through sin.” When Adam sinned, we sinned; we sinned in Adam. This, of course, is the doctrine of original sin.

Now many people have a problem with this. They say, “Shouldn’t I be held responsible for my own sins? I didn’t ask to be born this way?” There’s another popular expression, right?: “born this way.” “I didn’t ask to be born a sinner.”

Well, that’s the way it is, folks. And there is nothing we can do about it. There is nothing that we can do to change it; there’s nothing *we* can do. But only God through Christ can change it, and praise God, He has for us, for His redeemed people.

And that’s the #1 objection to Christianity, isn’t it? It’s the problem of suffering, evil and death. It’s been called the Achilles’ heel, the weak spot, of Christianity. Of course it’s the Achilles’ heel of all philosophies and religions. And ironically the same people who complain about the problem of evil are also the same people who say that there are no moral absolutes, right? That’s rather interesting there. And if we’re just chemicals fizzing in a glass, what’s the big deal anyway? If we’re just material, then so what if we die?

Of course most people don’t live like that. We grieve at death; we hate death. That shows the imprint of God, that we’re born in His image.

So why did God ordain that sin would come into the world, beginning with the fall of the angels and humanity through Adam? You know, we as fallen, sinful human beings think that God could have saved us a lot of suffering and catastrophe. Well, God’s ways are not our ways; His thoughts are not our thoughts, as Isaiah 55:8 and following says. It is God’s prerogative as God to do what He wants to do. He is all-wise and all-good; we are not. And we have to remind ourselves of that from time to time.

God chose for us the best possible representative in Adam that we could have. And we as Americans are somewhat familiar with this in our form of government. I remember that my aunt did not like Donald Trump, to say the least. And she said, “He’s not my President!” Well, in a certain sense he was, because he was the president of the whole country; the country voted for him.

I know that’s a weak analogy. But God chose Adam as our representative, as our federal head. Augustine, and then Calvin centuries later, talked about this and said that it

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pleased God that it would glorify Him more that sin entered the world than if it didn't; there was a grand purpose. God hates sin, but He ordains what He hates. He had a greater purpose in that, and was more glorified than if sin had not entered the world.

If it were not for the entrance of sin into the world, we wouldn't know God in His fullness. We wouldn't know His mercy. We wouldn't know His grace through Christ. It's not that we're not responsible; we most certainly are. And that's all I'm going to say about that. Maybe God will explain more to us someday.

And then for those who have a problem being represented by Adam, what are you going to do about being represented by Christ? We stand or fall being represented by Christ. We fall represented in Adam, and we stand only because we are represented by Christ. We are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and it has been imputed to us. We are justified in Him.

And the absolute wonder of it all is that God uses sin and death for His glory and for our good. You know, this is the thing that these proponents of AI have missed. John Lennox said something absolutely brilliant. He knows some of these proponents and he talked to one of them. And he said, “The only problem with your proposal of immortality, and reversing the problem of death by the way you want to do it, is that you're two thousand years too late!” *(Laughter)*

And they looked at him and said, “What?” *(Laughter)* Don't you realize that it's the central teaching of Christianity that Jesus has done that? He has reversed death! He has reversed the problem of death through His Incarnation and His death. Ironically enough, by His death He conquered death, and through His glorious Resurrection that Mike talked about last week.

You know, that is absolutely mind-boggling! Of course, people say, “Well, that's just a fairy tale; that didn't really happen. “No, it did, praise God!

**David Miller:** Don?

**Don:** Yes? Dave, speak up, please.

**David:** Yes. Sin and salvation validate love: God's love for us, our love for God. People typically think, “If I were present back at the creation of man, I would have given God some advice and that would have made men better.” *(Laughter)* But the way He made us was not as robots, but with the ability to choose to love Him. I think that validates love. *(Unclear)*

**Don:** Okay, I'm going to play devil's advocate here.

**Ted:** Do you want to leave that alone, Don?

**Don:** Yes, I do. I understand what you're saying, Dave. No, we don't want to be robots. Love has to have emotion for sure. But my only problem with that is that we're going to be robots in heaven, because in heaven we're not going to be able to sin. But we're going to love, right? We're going to love like we've never loved before. So I'm just going to leave it at that right now. I understand what you're saying. I disagree a little bit with that. But certainly God did give Adam the choice. He was really the only person since then who has really had free will in that ultimate sense. But I'm going to leave that alone.

**David:** In heaven we'll be super-charged.

**Don:** Yes, you got it. We're gonna—

**John:** I have another comment along the lines of making man right.



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**Don:** Yes.

**John:** That was the purpose from the beginning, because God did make man right when He became one. He would live that perfect life.

**Don:** Amen.

**John:** And he went through that death. Think about this for a second. Why did Jesus die? Why did Jesus have to die?

**Don:** The book has a whole chapter on that. Go ahead.

**John:** I’ll ask the question. Why did Jesus have to die?

**Gary:** Propitiation.

**John:** No.

**Don:** Yes. Part of—

**John:** No.

**Ted:** Yes.

**John:** No.

**Don:** Yes.

**John:** No.

**Don:** Yes.

**John:** He chose to be a propitiation for us. He did not have to be a propitiation for us.

**Don Rimbey:** Okay.

**Don Maurer:** But in the counsel of the Godhead—

**John:** Why did He have to die?

**Ted:** Obedience.

**John:** Okay. Why did He have to die according to the Scriptures?

**Don Bishop:** Somebody had to pay the penalty for sin.

**John:** No one made God do anything. He didn’t have to pay a penalty. It’s a simple question; you’re over-thinking it. Why did Jesus have to die?

**Brave Man:** To conquer death.

**John:** Because He became a Man.

**Ted:** Yeah; there you go.

**Don Maurer:** Yes, the Incarnation.

**John:** Right. He only had to die because He became a Man.

**Don:** Because man sinned.

**John:** He was a perfect Man. But because He was a Man, He had to die to defeat death, because death could not conquer Him, because He was also God. Let that sink in for a while.

**Don:** John, I’ll tell you what. You have really done it; that’s great. I mean, I was about to come over there and accuse you of heresy. *(Laughter)* And you just got out of it very well. *(Laughter)*

**Brave Man:** I got there before you did. *(Laughter)*

**John:** You may have to accuse me of such things. *(Laughter)*

**Don:** Okay.

**Ted:** It’s the Incarnation, right? That’s what you’re talking about, the necessity of the Incarnation.

**John:** Well, right. And we couldn’t get into all of this now, but we could get into issues with Jesus actually being truly Man and what the implications are there.

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**Don:** Oh!

**John:** But the only reason He had to die, unless you wanted to deny the sinlessness of Christ, is because He was a Man. If He wasn't a Man, He couldn't die in my place for a propitiation.

**Don:** Very much so. Now you know why I love Christmas so much, because the Incarnation is the foundation of all of the rest of these and of the work of Christ.

**Ted:** Absolutely right.

**Don:** Yeah.

**Ted:** And it was Athanasius at the debate for the Nicene Creed who said, “*What He did not assume He cannot redeem.*”

**Don:** Right, yeah. Excellent.

**Ted:** Because the Arians were saying that He wasn't fully Man and God.

**Don:** Mm-hmm.

**Ted:** “What He did not assume He did not redeem.”

**Don:** The Arians said He wasn't God. The Docetists said that He wasn't fully Man.

**Ted:** Yeah.

**Don:** Okay. Next: *What Happens After Death?* First of all, let's talk about what doesn't happen. I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time on this for the sake of time; they are there for you. It's certainly not that we cease to exist. Reincarnation is not as big a deal as it was in the '70s. A lot of people were into that in the '70s and '80s—Shirley McLaine, etc. That's not talked about so much anymore. But of course “it is appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment.”

The ones I have listed for you are popping up in the Christian church. *Universalism:* everyone will go to heaven, either because they are sincere in their own religion, or if you put a Christian spin on it, the work of Christ is such that Christ died for everyone, therefore everyone is saved. They go one step beyond the Arminians. The Arminians will say that Christ died for everyone, but not everyone is saved. But the universalists say that everyone is saved.

They say that God is love. Love is God's only attribute, or His most important or overarching attribute. Love can't send anyone to hell, and therefore everyone will be saved. And so we dare not pit one attribute of God against another.

Needless to say, there are so many Scriptures that speak to the contrary. We must all have faith in Christ in order to be saved. He is the only way to God. Jesus spoke more about hell than He did about heaven. And while God does not delight in the death of the wicked, and “*is not willing that any should perish,*” He must execute His justice.

Another one is *annihilationism*. The Christians will have eternal life; all the rest will be put out of existence. In the twinkling of an eye they will no longer exist. But the Scripture teaches that there is existence after death. The rich man in the parable or the account—I think it's the account—of Lazarus and the rich man is conscious after death, experiencing all the torments of hell.

And then *second probation*, the teaching that the unsaved at death get a second chance. No, “*Now is the day of salvation*” the Scripture says. The urgency of proclaiming Christ is now. Why have missionaries? Why do that if there is a second chance? Again, immediately the rich man goes into torment at death. And so there is no second chance.

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And then there is the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, where the righteous are not fully purified at death. And so they have to go through suffering until they are completely pure. No, we believe that we are completely clothed with the righteousness of Christ. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us and we are justified at death, and so at that point we are fit to go to heaven and we will become holy. I could spend a lot more time on these, but I’m going to hurry on here to the next point.

All right. What does happen after death? I think that *Westminster Larger Catechism* question 86 answers this question very well. “*After death the souls of the elect*”—those in Christ, those who are saved—“*are then made perfect in holiness and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies, which even in death continue united to Christ, and rest in their graves, as in their beds, till at the last day they be again united to their souls.*”

Theologians call this “the intermediate state.” Paul says that “*to live is Christ and to die is gain*” in Philippians 1 verse 21. 2 Corinthians 4 verse 8 says: “*Absent from the body, present with the Lord.*” The Lord said to the thief on the cross, “*This day you shall be with me in Paradise.*”

All right. Imagine! Perfect in holiness! No sin to be tempted by or to worry about anymore! Fullness of joy! The Bible says in Isaiah 51 verse 11 that “*fullness of joy shall be on their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*” David in Psalm 16 writes: “*In Thy presence is fullness of joy; At Thy right hand are pleasures forevermore.*”

Now I have a zillion questions and you probably do too. What is it like to be a disembodied spirit? Do we communicate with God and with each other? I suspect that we do. From Jesus’ conversation with Moses and Elijah we know that Moses didn’t have a body. The people in Revelation say, “*How long, O Lord?*” They’re waiting. “*Wait a little while longer for your complete redemption,*” and the people’s vindication.

Do our dead loved ones know what is going on? I suspect not. I know a lot of people wish it were that way. But nothing interrupts their happiness, and I don’t think that they’d be happy knowing our sadness. But I don’t know. Will there be animals there? My mom and I got into a discussion about that. She thought that our pets—our birds and dogs—would be there. I said, “*Mom, I don’t think so because they don’t have souls.*”

And she said, “*When you get to heaven they’re gonna bite you because you didn’t think they’d be there.*” (*Laughter*) That’s my mom! (*Laughter*)

The statement in WLC 86 is about our bodies resting in their beds. Where do they get that? They get that from Isaiah 57, verses 1 and 2, where it says: “*The righteous are taken away from calamity; he enters into peace. They rest in their beds who walk in their uprightness.*” Obviously that doesn’t apply to some people in this life who are going through unbelievable suffering and persecution. But think of it. One minute, horrible suffering and sadness; the next minute, instant glory forever.

Okay. What about the wicked? “*The souls of the wicked are then cast into hell, where they remain in torments and outer darkness, and their bodies kept in their graves, as in their prisons, until the resurrection and judgment of the Great Day.*”

Those in hell or Hades or Tartarus—what John was teaching when he taught the book of Jude—also have an intermediate state, and they are experiencing torment. Can you

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imagine guilt, regret, that kind of thing forever? It is never in any way to be mitigated or decreased.

It says in 2 Peter 2:4 that the angels are kept in judgment. And in verse 9 God reserves the ungodly for punishment to the judgment of the Great Day. So this is what happens after death in the intermediate state. Again I know I’m rushing through this. Go ahead.

**Ted:** Don, Do you want to take more time later? I think that to me this is just very important.

**Don:** I think I can get through this, Ted. Thank you.

**Ted:** I’m sorry.

**Don:** No problem. Then we have of course the Second Coming, the resurrection, the final judgment and eternity. Mike Davis did a great job last week covering this. But in the time we have left let me just say a few things.

This is the order that I understand the Bible to teach. I know that there is disagreement. We can get into the millennium, when the rapture takes place and all the things surrounding that. But we know that *“the trumpet will sound.”* Handel’s “Messiah”; I love it! When Christ comes it won’t be a secret rapture, like the *Left Behind* novels or *The Late Great Planet Earth* talks about. It’s going to be a noisy rapture. The trumpet will sound; everyone will hear it. The dead will be raised, and those who are on earth will go to be with the Lord. You can call it the rapture, if you like. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 talks about it. There are many places in Scripture that refer to this. And of course the judgments that take place pale in comparison with what will happen at that time.

As we talked about last week, the resurrection of the body is crucial and of utmost importance. Paul does not consider this a minor error. He deals with it at great length, as Mike taught us last week in 1 Corinthians 15. If you don’t believe in the resurrection, you’re not a Christian. In a sense, as Ted said last week, this sets Christianity apart from every other world system. And because Christ lives, we will live also with Him forever.

There will also be a resurrection of the wicked, of the unsaved. Daniel 12:1-2: Some are raised to life, some are raised to shame and everlasting contempt. Christ said it in John 5:28 and 29. “An hour is coming when those that have done good”—Christians—“will rise to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.” Paul said to Felix that there will be *“a resurrection both of the righteous and of the wicked.”*

And then there is the final judgment. Everyone will participate in the final judgment, even Christians. Jesus said that in Matthew 25. Paul said that all of us *“must appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”* Of course, in our case we will do it for rewards. It can be a fearful thing to contemplate. But remember that we have already been clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and so we are already saved. We will be with Him forever. And so we will give an account to receive rewards. That will be a wonderful thing and everyone will be happy with what they have, that’s for sure.

Okay. There’s a lot more I could say about that. Of course, the wicked at that time will have to give an account. They will stand naked before God in all of their sin. They will have to give an account for every word they say, every thought they have, every deed they’ve done. And they will be cast into the lake of fire.

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Okay. So how do we prepare for death? Unlike the world, unlike our culture, how can we prepare for death? I don't mean all the physical preparations that need to go into it; I mean spiritually. Let me just talk very, very quickly about five things.

1. *Attend to the means of grace:* worship, reading your Bible, the Lord's Supper, all of these that Christ has established.

2. *Commune often with God in Christ.* If *“to live is Christ and to die is gain,”* if it's true that *“for me to live is Christ,”* and that *“it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me,”*—no longer I who live but I live for the Son of God—union with Christ; how much we've talked about that. Commune with Him. We're going to be spending eternity with Him. Commune with Him through reading the word of God in the Gospels. Pray to Him; just contemplating His excellence. After all, Christ and the Holy Spirit live in us.

3. *Enjoy fellowship with God's people.* We're going to be together forever; we might as well start loving each other right now—supporting one another, bearing one another's burdens. I think we do this very well as the Brave Men. I hope you do that in the churches that you attend, and that your churches are love feasts where you love each other. It's the importance of the body of Christ, we can't be “lone ranger Christians.” We're not to *“forsake the assembling of ourselves together,”* as Hebrews 10:24-25 says, but *“to spur one another to love and good deeds,”* and especially as we see the Day approaching.

4. Next, *hold this world loosely.* We all have to work on this in light of our culture, especially when things are going well for us. When things are going well I just cruise along. I like to listen to my music, etc. I get all hypnotized with my phone and all the things that it can do. Well you know, sometimes the Lord has to send affliction to kind of get our bearings and for us to get our perspective.

Hold on to this world loosely. Paul says that in 1 Corinthians 7. “Let those who have wives live as if they didn't, having all the goods of this world as if they didn't belong to us.” Sure, we're to enjoy the things that God has given us, but we're not to live for them because we are citizens of heaven, right? We're citizens of heaven. This world is not our home; we're just passing through.

5. And then related to that, *think often of heaven.* Colossians 3:1 says that we are to set our *“affections on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.”* Set your affections on heaven. Think of it in comparison to this miserable world with all the suffering. Think of how wonderful heaven is going to be with our Savior. That's what makes heaven heaven, right? If Christ were not there then it wouldn't be heaven. All the things that God has in store for us, that *“eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man,”* think of those things. That will sustain you. And that will help you when you're dealing with loved ones and with people who are dying.

Last week some people from the Bible study that Bob Parker attended for decades went to do that very thing: to minister to him, to read Scripture to him, to pray with him, to sing hymns with him. And of course for unbelievers the most wonderful thing we can do is to tell them the good news of the gospel.

Okay. So in conclusion let me just read the words from a hymn that some of you may know, and then a few Scriptures.

*“Be still, my soul. The hour is hastening on*

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*When we shall be forever with the Lord.  
When disappointment, grief and fear are gone,  
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.  
Be still, my soul. When change and tears are past,  
All safe and bless-ed, we shall meet at last.”*

And from the word of God:

*“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD  
Forever.”* Psalm 23 verse 6.

And then Romans 8:38-39: *“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* And all the Brave Men said,--

**Brave Men:** Amen!

**Don:** Let us pray. Our Father and our God, the words of Peter are our words. *“Lord, to whom shall we go?”* You alone have the words of eternal life. You alone, Lord, give us the hope that the world lacks. And so, Father, we pray that You would just help us to keep these things in mind, because we know that our salvation is closer to us now than when we first believed. And every day brings us closer to that day when we will be with You forever. And so, Father, I pray that You would help us to contemplate these things, and that Lord, You would be with us in a mighty way today as we go through our various tasks. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. *(Applause)*