

Life is Short, Death is Sure, Sin the Cause, Christ the Cure

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 February 2009

Preacher: Aaron Hoak

[0:00] Please turn with me in your Bibles tonight to Hebrews 9. Generally speaking, I am not a fan of church marquee religion.

! There may sometimes be some tiny grain of truth in these, but there's usually not enough there to be of help to anyone.

Generally, or at all, God's Word doesn't need any cutesy slogan to make it more pointed or memorable. But even I, in my crusty old theological precision, can sometimes appreciate one marquee.

And I can only really think of, generally speaking, I keep saying that, don't I? And there's one sign around here that I see on a regular basis that doesn't make me groaning. It's usually because it has Scripture on it.

But outside of that, there's been one thing that I've seen painted on the side of a barn here. I heard it when I was a child, and I haven't been able to forget it since I was a child. I think I've mentioned it before, and the saying, I think, is different from some of the other ones.

[1:21] It contains an accurate summary of truth of God's Word. It doesn't really have the clever factor. And it's this. It's life is short, death is sure, sin the cause, Christ the cure.

And you've likely heard it before. And I want to think about that tonight with us. Life is short, death is sure, sin the cause, and Christ the cure. The last two, I think about every day.

Because I sin every day. And every day I have to go back to the cross for forgiveness. And I hope that you think about it every day. I hope you go to the cross every day. I hope that you don't treat sin and the need for forgiveness the way I treat my car.

Yesterday was a beautiful day. It was above 50 degrees, and the sun was shining. And my car had accumulated about two months' worth of salt and snow and everything else.

I said, you know what? I'm going to take my car to the car wash today. Because it needs to be cleaned. And now my van is nice and clean, and so is the car. But you can't really tell the difference with the car. Anyway, I did that yesterday.

[2:24] I hadn't done it for about probably two months. Went and cleaned my car because it needed it. As Christians, we can't do that. You can't wait for two months and say, oh, I've accumulated some sin here that's gone unrepentant of.

But every day we have to be back and realizing the significance of our sin against God and our need for repentance. So I hope you think about sin the cause and Christ the cure every day.

But the first two, life is short and death is sure, perhaps we don't think about as often. I don't think about them as often as I do the last two. But I've recently had reason to think about them again.

Life is short, death is sure. The death of another very young high school student reminded me of the first and the second. The death of my own grandfather over the Christmas break reminded me of the second as well.

That death is sure. And so as we gather tonight to partake of the Lord's Supper, where we remember our sin and our Savior, let's consider these things so that we might be moved to thanks and praise again tonight.

[3:27] That we might have our hearts stirred with gratitude to God. That our faith in this Christ might be strengthened tonight. And that some might come to faith in Christ for the first time tonight.

And we find some of these truths here in Hebrews 9 verses 27 and 28. Notice them with me. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.

And He will appear a second time not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him. We start with life is short tonight. Besides being able to observe that from the world around us, our experience tells us that.

I want us to see it from Scripture. That's the one that's not explicitly here in Hebrews 9. But the testimony of Scripture is that life is short. James 4 and verse 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. Or Moses tells us in Psalm 90. The length of our days is 70 years. Or 80 if we have the strength.

[4:36] Yet their span is but trouble and sorrow. For they quickly pass. And we fly away. Now my grandfather, by some standards, lived a long time. You lived 87 years.

But compared to history and compared to eternity, it was just a moment. And so whether you're 17 when you die, or 87, life is short.

So what does that mean for you? We tend to live life like we'll be here forever. But we won't. And perhaps even more than the brevity, the shortness of life, its uncertainty is even more to the point tonight.

We don't know if we'll live to the end of this service, let alone to tomorrow, or for many years to come after this. We simply don't know when our time on earth will end.

You say, well, why bring that up at a service where we remember the Lord's death, His supper that we have to remember His death, to feed on Him by faith? Well, what we remember here tonight is the way to be ready.

[5:38] regardless of when you die, to be ready for that death. To be ready to pass from this world into the next. If you're hoping and trusting in Christ alone and His substitutionary death for the forgiveness of your sins, in many ways, it doesn't matter when your life ends.

Because regardless of when it ends, you'll be ready. The outcome is secure. If you're a partaker tonight, a partaker of these elements, and more importantly, a partaker of Christ Himself.

You know the blessing that comes from confidence in your future, knowing that you're a child of God and nothing can change that. And it'll take you home to heaven. You don't know when your life will end, but you know what will happen when it doesn't.

You'll be in glory. But if you're here tonight as an observer, not a partaker of Christ, then the uncertainty and brevity of life should sober you because secondly, death is sure.

Your death is coming. Hebrews 9.27, Just as man is destined or appointed to die once, and after that to face judgment, you will die.

[6:43] You are taken from the ground and you will return to the ground. Genesis 3.19 It's inevitable. The only way you'll avoid death is if Christ comes back first.

And that won't solve your problem because after death comes judgment. Or with the coming of Christ will come the judgment. judgment. And you'll still have to face that judgment.

And you'll be consigned for all of eternity to one of two outcomes. One is eternal blessing in heaven with Christ and one is eternal suffering in hell with the devil and his angels, his demons.

So however morbid it may seem to talk about it, death is sure. It's coming. You can't avoid it. You don't get a special exemption. I know, especially for you young people, that you feel like you are invincible, that life will go on for many years.

You've still got to get to where your parents are. They're old. And then to where your grandparents are. And they're really old. And so there's all of life stretching out before you. Or so it would seem.

[7:42] Old age, death seemed like an eternity away to you. Something that doesn't even deserve your consideration, but you're wrong. The death of another 17-year-old demonstrates that once again.

It's something that you need to think about now if you're not ready to die. When your death comes, expected or unexpected, you'll be headed for an eternity of suffering. Your death is coming.

And it is sure. And you can't avoid it. You can't dodge it. You can't escape it. And after you die, you'll face judgment. And if your hope is not Christ, then your eternity will be hell.

And your death, maybe this is obvious to us, will only happen once. It's appointed to man to die once. Just one time. You don't get to come back as something else and get another chance a second time around.

You're not going to be reincarnated. You die one time. And that's it. If you miss the boat this time around, it's not coming back around again. And so there's a negative anticipation if you don't know

Christ.

[8:46] I hope a dread of the day that you die. Of the day that Christ comes again because it'll be the day that you're consigned to an eternity of torment. It's like some things we look forward to and we're excited about.

Other things we look forward to and we dread. It's like an exam coming tomorrow that you haven't studied for, that you haven't prepared for. It's not an eager anticipation. It's a dread anticipation. You would put it off if you could.

You delay it. It's the anticipation of a child about to receive a spanking and the wince and they don't want it to come. They know it's coming but they don't want it. That's what it will be like for you.

Your death is coming. It's coming. But if you're not in Christ then it's not something you should be looking forward to. Anticipating eagerly. There's nothing enjoyable about it.

It's full of fear. So life is short tonight. Death is sure. Sin is the cause. Isn't this what we remember when we come to the Lord's table? That it was our sin that put our Savior on the tree on the cross.

[9:47] More of that in a moment but our sins are the cause. You see here in Hebrews 9.28 that it was for our sins that Christ was sacrificed. Romans 5.12 Therefore just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin and in this way death came to all men because all sinned.

Life is short. Death is sure. Sin is the cause. Death came through sin. The wages of sin is death. We've seen the same thing in James 1.

And don't let this be just a generic truth for you tonight. The reason that there's death is because there's sin. And it's true that sin came into the world through one man and death through that sin. But then the rest of it is that death came to all men because all sinned. And you are in that all. Your temper, your gossip, your angry words, your lustful look, your uncontrolled tongue, and countless other sins are the reason that you are going to die and face judgment for those sins.

And if you haven't repented and you haven't trusted in Christ, you don't have Christ, then you'll be sent to an eternity of punishment. There is no other option. There's no purgatory where you can work off a few more of those sins and eventually work your way into heaven.

[11:06] No, you'll be punished and you'll be punished forever. Now that's a bleak message that we've got so far. You're going to die. And if you die in your sin, you're going to hell.

You're alive, but not for long. And there'll be an eternity of suffering, but there is good news. Your sins are also the sins that necessitated the coming of a Savior.

If God was going to save a people for Himself and He decreed He's going to save a people, if that's going to happen, He can't just pretend like we haven't sinned. He can't just overlook our sin. He can't just say, it's no big deal that you've sinned, I'm going to save you anyway.

There has to be a payment for that sin. There has to be a sacrifice. Someone has to pay the penalty of death for that sin. And so your sins are the sins that necessitated the coming of a Savior.

And so, how can a person like you or me that deserves punishment instead receive life and blessing? How does God save sinners? There's only one way.

[12:03] It's Christ the cure. Verse 28, So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.

Christ was sacrificed once. He was offered as the perfect sacrifice for sin. He's the Passover lamb. Sins could never really be placed on an animal to be punished in our place.

Those animals of the sacrificial system were just a picture. Pointing forward to Christ, sins had to be borne by a man, someone that could take the place of men. And Jesus was that man.

And His sacrifice is again what we've gathered to observe and remember here tonight, to proclaim tonight. He came and offered Himself a living sacrifice.

The sins of His people were placed on Him at the cross. In the Old Testament, the priest would place his hands on the animal to be killed, symbolizing the placing of the sins on that animal.

[13:10] And then that animal was slaughtered instead of the people being slaughtered. And at the cross, as it were, the hands of the priest were placed on Christ except He is the priest.

And so He took our sins on Himself. And He was slaughtered. He was punished so that we don't have to be. He became our sin-bearer, our curse-bearer.

He drank the cup of God's wrath down to the dreg so that there's nothing left for us to drink of God's wrath. His blood was shed. His body was pierced with thorns, nails, and a spear.

Isaiah 53, He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.

That's what happened at the cross. By His wounds we are healed. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He bore the sin of many.

[14:14] That's what happened at the cross. Your sins, child of God, were put on the Savior. So instead of killing us, God kills His own son which is beyond our comprehension.

If you have a child, you can imagine, you can't imagine slaying your own son for someone else. But God did this for us. And just as death is only once, so Christ sacrificed just once.

It was perfect. It was infinite. It doesn't need to be repeated. When we come to the Lord's Supper tonight, we're not sacrificing Jesus again. This is a picture of His body and blood. It is not His body and blood being offered again because we think we need another sacrifice.

No, it was once He was sacrificed to take away our sins. And so when Jesus comes again, it won't be with reference to sin as He did in His first coming.

He doesn't come to bear sin again. He's done that. He'll come to bring salvation in its fullness. The consummation of our salvation. The fullness of the blessing that we are waiting for. And that's what we look forward to.

[15:17] And so, Paul says in Romans 6, the wages of sin is death, yes, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Christ earned that salvation. He did it once. You can't earn it again.

It's a gift that you receive by faith. Or Romans 4, He was delivered over to death for our sins, raised to life for our justification. He paid the price. You can't pay it again. And even if you wanted to, you couldn't.

And so your only hope tonight, if you want to be freed from sin, if you want to be forgiven, is Christ. He was punished for our sins. He saved us from our sins.

And don't think of it again tonight as something generic. Jesus died for sinners. It was your sins that put Him on that cross of pain and agony and curse bearing.

Your sins forgiven there, child of God. When you read Isaiah 53 or Hebrews 9, read yourself into the story because as one who has faith in Christ, you're there. The sacrifice of Christ is the one that we remember tonight.

[16:17] The bread, the cup, picture the body and blood in which we share. We share in His suffering, His death. We'll share in His resurrection. So we who are joined so tightly inseparably to Christ, what should we do with that sin that yet remains in us?

Have you struggled with sin in the past week? I have. Have you sinned in the past week? I have. What do we do with that sin where we go back to the cross again and again in repentance? If our sins put Christ there, then we should hate that sin.

We should be putting it to death, not indulging it, not tolerating it, killing it. Is that what you're doing with your sin? Are you in a battle with the sin that remains? If you love Jesus, you will be.

Because you'll remember what that sin did to Him. This work of Jesus affects a radical change. Before we were dreading judgment, dreading our death, dreading the second coming of Christ, anticipating it with fear, with trembling.

And now we can look forward to the coming of Christ with eager anticipation. You see it there in verse 28? Wait. Christ will appear a second time not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.

[17:30] The Word is eagerly anticipating Him coming again. And so He takes that dread and He turns it into the excitement that we feel when we're looking forward to something. It's the exam that you're ready for, the one that you've studied for, and you're sure that you'll do well.

Looking forward to Christmas coming or your birthday. It's that eager anticipation that Christ works in us. He thoroughly changes our perspective on death and the judgment to come.

And we don't look forward to death. Death is still not a natural thing. It's the result of sin. But what comes after death we don't have to fear if we are in Christ. It's not judgment coming or not punishment coming.

It's an eternity within. It's glory. It's reward. It's blessing beyond imagination. It's the inheritance that's waiting for us. We're all anticipating death and judgment.

The question is, are you dreading it? Or are you eagerly waiting for the coming of Christ? Well, thanks to what Christ has done, His life, His death, we can look forward to it.

[18:32] And the fact that you're here tonight, remembering the Lord's death until He comes, demonstrates that you're looking forward to His coming again. We're to do this until He comes again.

We're one day closer, brothers and sisters in Christ. One day closer. One day closer to glory. One day closer to being done with this struggle that we face daily with sin. One day closer to the coming of Christ.

We're reminded tonight, He's not physically present with us on the earth, but He is present by His Spirit, isn't He? We aren't alone.

We walk through this life with the indwelling Spirit and we walk through it, communing not just with God, yes, but with one another. We commune with each other tonight. It's why we need to be right with men as well as with God when we come to partake.

And so as we go through this life anticipating the coming of Christ, we walk surrounded by the people of God. That's the way to live the Christian life. Together, waiting for Christ to come.

[19:34] To bring those benefits of full salvation with Him. Do you ever think about eternity? Do you ever talk about it with your brothers and sisters in Christ? Do you ever fellowship around the subject of eternity?

And what it might be like to be with Christ? To be free from sin you should. Do you eagerly look forward to it? You should. And you can because of what we do here tonight.

What we remember here tonight. You can because of Christ. But if for some tonight, it's when you honestly think about eternity, you're dreading it.

You dread the coming judgment because you haven't trusted in this Christ. And so the judgment that comes won't be a good one for you, but it can be. Everything that Christ is for so many of us here tonight, He can be for you.

The work that He did at the cross can be for you. Would you come tonight and say, God, be merciful to me, the sinner. And if you cry that with a sincere heart, He will be.

[20:38] He will forgive your sins. He will save you. And then you'll be able to join with this happy band of forgiven sinners on the way to glory. You'll be able to partake of this meal.

You'll be able to realize what it means to have your sins lifted off of you and placed upon Jesus. That sacrificial lamb. Punished in your place. To no longer fear and dread punishment because somebody was punished for you.

To no longer dread eternity because it will be an eternity of glory and reward. It can be yours tonight. If you would become and trust in Christ. You talk to one of your parents or a friend that knows Christ or to one of your pastors and have them explain it more fully or walk you through it if you need that.

But come to Christ. Don't let fear hold you back. Don't let hesitation. I don't know what to say. I don't know how to pray. I don't know what my friends will think. You shake off all of those excuses and all of those fears and you run to Christ tonight and you'll find what so many others have found.

That He will not turn you away. That He will receive you. That He will save you from your sins. Some people say that there's only two certain things in life.

[21:49] Death and taxes. And it's tax time. And maybe you're thinking about taxes and the certainty of them looming before you. But I say tonight because God's Word says that yes, death is certain.

That's guaranteed. But the other thing that's certain is not taxes. The government could collapse and you wouldn't have to pay your taxes. No guarantee about taxes.

But what is certain is eternal life after death. And you can be certain of eternal life because of what Christ has done at the cross. Because of what we remember and partake of here tonight.

And so may God strengthen our faith to have greater confidence and eager anticipation as we look forward to the second coming of our Savior. You come and you trust in this Christ and you can be guaranteed that there will be an eternity in glory with Christ.

And if you are trusting in Christ, that is guaranteed. Nothing can take it away from you. Christ has done the work. And nothing can snatch you out of the hand of God. And so your death is certain, but so also is your security in Christ.

[22:56] And so we can take great comfort in the work that He has done as we remember it tonight.