

Understanding Death – Proverbs 2:10-22

INTRODUCTION – Death is something man does not like to face or talk about. However, no matter how we might ignore the subject, death will come upon all mankind without exception. The rich, poor, healthy and sickly will all have to face death which can come upon anyone at any time. The Bible says that it is better to be in the house of mourning, i.e. a house where death is, than to be in a house of feasting where everyone pretends to have a good time and thinks that life is one gigantic merry making adventure. Life and death are inseparable twins as long as you are born into this world. Therefore, it is important for all to have the right perspective of death in order to make right decisions in life!

There are three kinds of death described in the Bible:

- The first is spiritual death. This death occurs in every human the moment he begins to exist in his mother's womb. He is conceived in sin and therefore is also born in sin. This is original sin which he inherits from Adam (cf. Romans 5). The moment Adam sinned against God in the Garden of Eden by eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he died spiritually.
- The second kind of death taught in Scriptures is physical death. Physical death is the death of the body of flesh. Because of sin, this body of ours, which is only good for this earth, dies.
- The third kind of death is the second death. In the second death the sinner is cast into the Lake of Fire that burns without end. He is eternally separated from God. He will never escape and will be eternally punished by god because of the sins in his life. This is called the second death even though there are three deaths. The reason is because the spiritual and physical deaths are seen as one for they occur in this life time and the second death occurs after life on earth.

Time on this earth is of the utmost importance. It is only while a person is alive on earth that he can do something to get rid of all three deaths! Good works or man's philosophies will fail miserably. How can the person on death row get himself out of his death sentence?! All mankind is on death row. Only God can get him out of it! Jesus Christ is the answer. Jesus Christ died for us so that we can get out of death. Sin is the cause of death. Jesus Christ died for our sins and therefore all who believe in Christ will have all their sins forgiven by God. Once all sins are forgiven, death is no longer his end. The first death that is taken away by Christ is spiritual death! Immediately, the sinner becomes a saint and he is now alive in Christ. When his life on earth ends, his soul enters heaven and will be with God for eternity. His earthly body remains on earth and is considered asleep by God until the day when Christ returns to give him a glorified body. When that day comes, his soul will no longer be without a corporeal body. This is the climax of his salvation in Christ! The second death is no longer his lot for eternity!

The following passages in Proverbs touch on the first two deaths, with the second death the ultimate outcome if spiritual death is not eliminated through Christ while one is still alive on this earth! Your action in this earthly life can impact death - your own and others' as well! It is with this message in mind that we shall examine the following passages from the Book of Proverbs.

I. **Choose Life not Death** – Life or death is one's choice.

The life one leads today can lead to life or death in eternity. The first verse we shall consider is taken from **Proverbs 11:19**, “**As righteousness *tendeth* to life: so he that**

pursueth evil *pursueth it to his own death.*" (antithetical parallelism) – The contrast is clear in this verse. There is a difference between righteous deeds and a righteous person. A totally depraved sinner can do righteous deeds like giving to the poor, etc. but he is not righteous as a person, especially in the sight of God. God does not deny that the deeds of sinners can be considered righteous in themselves, even though they are considered as filthy rags in His sight. **Isaiah 64:6 (KJV)**, "But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." The difference between the first and second lines of Proverbs 11:19 is that the verb "pursueth" is used in the second but not in the first. The verb "pursueth" means "to run after something like a hunter after his prey." The person who rejects righteousness is actually running after evil which leads to death. There is no middle road. It is either righteousness that leads to life or evil that leads to death, which is to remain in spiritual death which in turn will lead to physical death and ultimately to the second death!

- **Unbeliever** – If the unbeliever does not possess righteousness, he dies. If he accepts Christ as his Lord and Saviour, he will possess the righteousness that leads to life eternal.
- **Believer** – The believer already has this righteousness of Christ that was imputed to him when he accepted Christ as his Lord and Saviour. He must thereafter live a life of righteousness as a testimony of this inward righteousness imputed to him.

Proverbs 12:28, "In the way of righteousness *is* life; and *in the pathway thereof there is no death.*"(synthetical parallelism) – The truth taught here is the same as in Proverbs 11:19. The difference is that Proverbs 12:28 describes the truth in contrast whereas Proverbs 11:19 describes the truth in synthetical function. The believer never dies. This is exactly what Jesus taught his disciples when He was on earth. **John 11:26 (KJV)**, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" This is to be understood in its literal sense. Jesus refers to all three deaths here! Every truly born again believer who has righteousness in him through Christ Jesus is delivered from all three deaths for eternity! The pathway of the believer will lead to no death at all. He begins to live a righteous life on this earth immediately after salvation. His spiritual death is removed from him instantly. RIGHTEOUSNESS will be the basis for all his decisions; whereas before conversion it was either situational ethics or self preservation that dominated his thinking and decision making!

Proverbs 13:14, "The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." (synthetical parallelism) – The law that now guides the believer is a fountain of life. It gives life to him just as it points others to this new life in Christ! The law is the Word of God that the believer ("the wise") will live by, as the light to guide him in making all his decisions. It is a life of holiness whereby he avoids sinning against God. He is careful with his life in thought, motive, word and deed. The verb "depart" means "to turn off or to eschew." He repents whenever he knows he has sinned against God. He gets rid of every sin in his life by repentance and tries with God's enabling not to sin. He will avoid at all costs the snares, i.e. traps that lead to death. What are some of these snares of death?

- II. **Sexual sin kills** – the most common sin today and is the serial killer that has taken the most lives.

Proverbs 2:10-22, "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things; Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked; Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths: To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it."

[Emphasis added] – This passage is self explanatory. The first part of this passage speaks of the way of righteousness versus the way of the evil man.

- The way of righteousness leads to life – Sexual sin and all other sins are avoided like the plague . . . in the heart and the mind and definitely in the act.
- The way of the evil man – he leaves the path of righteousness and walks the way of darkness. His delights include forwardness, i.e. speaks perverse things, rejoices to do evil, delights in the perversion of the wicked and crooked ways; their paths are perverse; sexual sin brings death. The death here enforces spiritual death leading to physical death and then the second death.

Proverbs 5:3-6, "For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them." – The sweet words of a carnal woman have killed many men and will continue to kill more if the men are not careful. Honeycomb was known in those days as the sweetest of all sweets. Her mouth is smoother than even oil. Man's two greatest weaknesses are sex and pride.

All CHRISTIAN MEN must be strong on these two counts if they want to live! The consequence is death! Let us guard ourselves in these two areas all the days of our lives and ensure purity at all costs! If any man listens to her and falls for her sweet and oily words, he will surely die. Her end is bitter like wormwood and leads to the depths of Hell. Stay away from such women!

III. Deadly Path of all – No path is more deadly than delusion.

Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (antithetical parallelism) – The way that seemeth right is the way of the world and the way of man's opinions. This includes false teachings that appear to be Bible based, for this is the best way to deceive professing believers and even some true believers. The phrase "which seemeth right" literally means "that is convenient or

pleasing." Convenience is a tantalising attraction; it lures the tired and weak body. Ease and comfort are very alluring to the flesh. The path of least resistance has gained many followers throughout the history of mankind. Man desires to find his own way to God by redefining Him so that man can live in sin and still enter heaven. These false doors that man has made throughout the ages lead only to death! These are doors of deception, for they are part of the delusion of the Evil One. The end of the road for man is death, spiritual, physical and ultimately the second death.

- Bringing up children – WAY OF MAN:- The door of education and the door of a luxurious life are doors that lead of death. This is not the way to bring up children. Education will not lead to eternal life. WAY OF CHRIST:- Bring them to Christ by teaching and living for Christ at home. Bring them to a fundamental and Christ centred Church where the Word of God, not the philosophies of man, is faithfully preached.
- Husband and Wife – WAY OF MAN:- A Christian husband and wife relationship is much more than just going to church and ensuring that their children go to Sunday School. Just staying married for the sake of appearances is definitely not the way of God. WAY OF CHRIST:- Husband and wife must both grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ together by studying God's Word and loving each other more and more every day. This is the way of God for the husband and wife.
- Employer and Employee – WAY OF MAN:- The way of man is to work for money and make as much money as possible and get the company into the fortune 500 club. The end of this way is death. He might get the accolades of his fellow man and receive awards for his business acumen, but in the end he dies with an empty hand! WAY OF CHRIST:- This is the way where the believer goes to work as an ambassador for Christ. He is on a spiritual mission and foremost in his mind is to live a holy life for Christ and to bear a godly witness. His motivation is to honour Christ. His work is a calling. He gives his best because he wants to please his LORD Jesus Christ in all he does. He does not want anyone to take away this blessed testimony that he wants to bear at all costs.
- Service in Church – WAY OF MAN:- Service in church is a facade to gain points and popularity. Some might even go into the full-time ministry and serve for money, i.e. filthy lucre. These care not for the flock but only to gain foolish fame and to balloon up vain pride. They are prepared to do anything; they will have this appearance of "humility and acceptability" in the church to gain inroads into the lives of the unsuspecting. These men are ultimately nothing but wolves in sheep's clothing that deceive and devour. WAY OF CHRIST:- He who goes the way of Christ will see the flock as Christ's. He will give his best in all he does and will live for others with no hidden agenda of self-aggrandizement. His service is always to please Christ because of his love for Christ. He seeks to be invisible in service and puts the welfare of others before his own. He does not murmur or complain when he serves.

Proverbs 16:25, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." – (antithetical parallelism) This verse is the same as the one above. God gave two verses for emphasis.

IV. Delivered from Death – the power of this earthly life.

Proverbs 10:2, "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death." (antithetical parallelism) – There is nothing wrong with the treasures of this earth as long the believer uses them for God's glory and attains them through hard work by the grace of God. As long as he does not love money, it is well with his soul. This verse warns us about treasures obtained by way of wickedness, and by devious means which might even be legal. The motive behind obtaining this wealth is evil. There is no profit in these. Material things have no true intrinsic value. Everything on this earth is worthless. The value of money is worthless. The fact that our currency keeps changing in value (man calls it inflation) should be a very tell-tale sign to believers that all earthly things are worthless. If this is not clear enough, then the fact that WE DIE AND WILL LEAVE ALL BEHIND is the most impelling evidence of all. Only eternal things have true worth, like our souls and the souls of our children. Our service for Christ and for His glory has eternal value.

That is exactly what the second line emphasizes. The righteousness of Christ delivers from death, i.e. snatches death away from the sinner. Our time on this earth is the only time when anyone can believe in Christ. It was not the time before birth because we did not exist. It is certainly not the time after death because our destinies sealed for eternity.

Proverbs 11:4, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." (antithetical parallelism) – The "day of wrath" refers to the day when everyone will stand before God on the Day of Judgement. The wrath of God will send all sinners who die in their sins to Hell. There is no exception. The money that we make on earth will not be able to appease God. The accolades of man gained on this earth will also be useless when God sentences one to Hell. There is no profit in riches!

But the righteousness of God through Christ will deliver a person from death, the three deaths. God wants to use your life in Christ and the preaching of the gospel to bring this about in the lives of your loved ones and friends who are in sin.

Proverbs 14:27, "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." (synthetical parallelism) – The fear of the LORD is the mainstay that will keep sin at bay. It is also the fountain of life in that the sinner will ultimately turn to Christ to seek forgiveness for all his sins. The wrath of God will be averted when all his sins are forgiven in Christ. The fear of God is what our children needs today. This fear must first be found in the parents. The fear of God is what every pastor and leader of the church needs in order to have a God honouring and Bible based church. The fear of God is the catalyst in every relationship that can keep sin far away from our lives!

With this fear of the LORD, sin is kept at bay and therefore the result of sin which is death is also averted. He who fears the LORD will see through the wiles of the Devil. He will easily know and readily avoid the snares that the devil sets in his path. Those who are far from God and have no fear of God in them will constantly stumble and fall into many unwanted snares. Their lives are in shambles, pain and sorrow. They feel like they are in a deep pit and there seems to be no way out! A believer should never be found in this pitiful state of sorrow and helplessness. The only way to get out of the pit is to get right with God. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom!

APPLICATION – This passage of Proverbs sums up this afternoon's lesson on death very appropriately. **Proverbs 24:11-12, "If thou forbear to deliver *them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; 12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider *it?* and he that keepeth thy soul, doth *not* he know *it?* and shall *not* he render to every man according to his works?"*** GOD KNOWS!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it that believers have a low view of sin and their testimony? What about you? How can a believer make right choices regarding his testimony for Christ so that his life is evidence of a new life in Christ and become a fountain of life to others when they see Christ in him?
2. Are there people in your life who are unbelievers and for whom you have been praying to be saved? Is there something in your life that hinders your testimony and which you find very difficult to get rid of? What if the LORD says to you that that thing is the hindrance to salvation upon whoever you are praying for? Would you give up that thing which is a sin, like an addiction perhaps? Do you believe that this motivation is better than the love of Christ?
3. "Sexual sins are prevalent in our world today." Do you agree with this statement? What is the best way to protect our children from devastating and deadly sins? Do you think that preventing them from watching TV and using the computer will help?
4. Are you living your life in light of life and death? Is it a life whereby the way of man rules or the Way of Christ?
5. Do you like money? Do you want lots of money? Please give reasons for your answers.