

The Choice of Eternity

Hebrews 9:27

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”

At some point in time each one of us will take a journey into eternity. The question is: "What will be waiting on the other side?" Some people believe in **annihilation**. They believe that the **body, soul** and **spirit** are so intermingled that when one dies, they all die, and **cease to exist**. **Some people believe in reincarnation**. They believe they will have many lifetimes to perfect themselves, or to work out their spiritual imperfections. However, the Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment." **Death is an experience that we all have to face.** We don't want to talk about it. We don't want to make plans for it. **But the truth of the matter is, we are all going to die if Jesus doesn't return for us.** Therefore, I must ask you, "What have you done to prepare for eternity?"

Revelation 20:12 says, "One day the great and the small shall stand before Almighty God." **The rich, the poor, the famous, shall stand before this Awesome God.** Perhaps you don't believe in **heaven** or **hell**. Maybe you don't even believe the Bible is the Word of God. Let me ask you this question: "What if you are wrong?"

You might be thinking, "Why are you doing this series?" **Because, if I can get you to stop and think about eternity, perhaps you will change some things in your life.** If I can get you to understand, **you too will stand before God one day and give an account for your life,** maybe you will consider asking Jesus Christ into your heart to be your Lord and Savior. Listen once more to Revelation 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

You see, it will not be me, or this church, or your denomination that will judge you, as seen in 2 Timothy 4:8, "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." The Bible teaches us that there will be two judgments: (1) the Judgment Seat of Christ is only for believers, and (2) the Great White Throne Judgment is only for unbelievers. There is no such teaching in the Bible that says we will stand before God to see if we are saved or not. 1 John 5:12 says, "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." Your place of judgment will be based on your relationship to Jesus Christ. If you are saved, you will be at the Judgment Seat of Christ. If you are not saved, you will be at the Great White Throne Judgment. There will be no "gate-crashers" on that day!

But, what about the books? It will be the Books of Heaven, which will declare your deeds in life. Listen to this warning given to believers in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." But, Revelation 20:12 reminds us that the unsaved will also be judged out of the books, "And the dead (those unbelievers) were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

One by one, every believer will stand before this Great and Awesome Judge at the Judgment Seat of Christ – NOT to be judged for our sins, Christ did that for us on the Cross! At the Judgment Seat of Christ believers will be judged for their works! I can imagine something like this, "Clifton Black come forward. You are next. Come and stand before this Judge." And the Books of Heaven will reveal what has been done for the glory of God, and what has been done

for the glory of self. That which has been done for the **glory of God will be rewarded,** and that which was done for the **glory of self will be discarded.**

On the other hand, one by one, every lost person will stand before this Great and Awesome Judge at the Great White Throne Judgment. Every **unsaved entertainer** will stand before this Judge. Every **unsaved plumber, prostitute, policeman, politician,** and **pastor,** will stand before this God, and the Books will judge them one by one.

Everyone will spend eternity somewhere! God has given you the opportunity to make that choice: **Heaven or hell.** The choice that you make today will effect you for an eternity.

The devil wants you to believe that bad people go to hell, and good people go to heaven. But getting up every morning and reading your Bible will not get you into heaven. The good things you have done for other people will not get you into heaven. Belonging to a certain church or denomination will not get you into heaven.

What, then, is the answer? Jesus made this statement in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; and no man can come to the Father, except through Me." In John 3:3, "Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." My friend, there must come a time in your life, that **through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, you realize** that you are **lost, unsaved,** and because of that realization, by faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, you ask Him to come into your life and make you a Christian.

What are we talking about when we talk about the finished work of Jesus? The Bible gives us the answer in Matthew 20:28, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." 1 Timothy 2:3-6 says, "This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. For, there is one God and one Mediator who can

reconcile God and humanity - the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone.”

In the Garden of Eden mankind sinned and that sin carried with it the price of death. It was a price that no man could pay until one day, "On a hill far away, stood an old rugged Cross, the emblem of suffering and shame." And on that cross the sinless Lord Jesus gave His life, that we might be set free from the curse of sin!

I tell you today, I love that old Cross. It is a constant reminder that my Lord gave His life as a ransom that a world of lost sinners might be saved. You might think the Cross is a mere piece of jewelry. When you are reminded of that Cross, you might think of it is a symbol rock stars wear around their necks.

But let me tell you: The real Cross of Jesus Christ is heavy. It is not pretty. It is covered with the Blood of my Lord. **It is stained, and the world doesn't want it.** But, it is beautiful to me. As my Master's Blood was shed upon it, **His life-giving Blood saved me** and **restored my life.** When I reached out to Him, **He lifted me out of the hurt, pain and despair of my life,** and **He gave me a purpose for living.**

I stand before you today to tell you: If you want to get the fear of dying out of you, call on the Name of the Lord. The Bible tells us in Acts 2:21, "...whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

You see, 2,000 years ago, Jesus took my guilt and punishment upon Himself. It was MY sin that nailed Him to the Cross. **I** was the one who was **guilty**, but **He** was completely **innocent.** **When I called upon the Name of the Lord, and repented of all my sins, He took all of my guilt, all of my sin, and all of my burdens from me.** It was all transferred to the Cross of 2,000 years ago. **What an incredible blessing to no longer fear death.** **I am so glad that I know, that I know, that I know, when I die I am going to heaven.** There was a time when I had no idea what I was going to find when I left this

earth. But, I am so grateful I know when I step from this life into the next, I will wake up in the arms of my Lord.

I am talking about knowing the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. I am talking about getting the Savior of the world on the inside of your heart. I am not talking about emotionalism, religion, or something fake or phony. I am talking about having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Let me assure you there is no religion that can save you. Jesus said in John 12:32, "And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." I believe God has placed a desire within each of us to know Him. I also believe you are here today because God wants you to understand the importance of calling on the Name of the Lord. He loves you so much that He is reaching out to you. And when you call out to Him in faith, He will answer you and bring you to Himself!

Make no mistake - there is a heaven to look forward to and a hell to shun. Heaven will be a place of love, joy and peace. Hell will be a place of heartache, pain, and separation from the goodness of God. Heaven is going to be heaven because Jesus is going to be there. Hell will be hell because the goodness of God is NOT going to be there. You must understand the Lord loves us so much; He always gives us the power of choice.

The Bible tells us in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." God's favor is following me and when I call on the Name of the Lord, His power flows in my life. His grace is holding back the hand of my enemies, right now. If it wasn't for the grace of God, I would already be in hell. And let me tell you: Chances are great if it weren't for the grace of God in your life, you would be there too.

I like what the writer said, when he said, "What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see. When I look upon His face, the One who saved me by His grace. When He takes me by the hand and leads me through the promised land. What a glorious day that will be."

If you are in this building today and not saved, please listen to this warning given in Isaiah 55:6, "Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." **There may be someone here today, who will never get to hear this message again.** It is the eleventh hour. The clock is ticking.

Every one please stand for prayer.

Father,

Thank You for my salvation that was provided for me in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Thank You that You loved me enough to send Your Son to die for me. I want to leave this place knowing that everything is right between You and me. I need Your forgiveness. Therefore, I repent of my sins and turn away from them today. Thank You for sins forgiven. In Jesus' name. Amen.