

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

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17
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THE DEFINITIVE NATURE OF DEATH

by Jim Stauffer

The value of our life is determined at our death

It is clear from Scripture each of us will make the choices in our lives. There are some who believe God controls everything that happens in the world and as a result, He decides how our lives will be lived. Whether we will obey His teaching or seek other authority or guide for our lives is determined before we are born. When we listen to the word revealed by the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor. 2:9-13**) we know this just is not so. According to the apostle Paul we are to pray for all men, especially those in authority. *This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* (**1 Timothy 2:3-4**)

Jesus, Himself pleaded for all men to accept salvation. *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* (**Matthew 11:28-30**)

Yet the Scriptures are rife with men and women who have chosen to ignore the promises of God to the faithful and His promise to condemn evil. From the beginning there were men who were selfish and lived to satisfy their own lusts and desires. These men are consistently portrayed as being cursed or condemned by God. Men such as Cain, Esau, King Saul and many others in the Old Testament. But the Lord, while teaching men during His personal ministry chose a person to illustrate the points we are making here. The story of the rich man and Lazarus illustrates the plight of the humble selfless servant of God as well as the outcome of the life of this rich man who was anything but selfless. In **Luke 16:19-31** the story is

told of a rich man who, *habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. At the same time there was, a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table.... "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.* (**Luke 16:22-23**)

Our life will determine God's response to our death

We can infer the life of Lazarus and the rich man by learning of the destination of each following death (**Matt. 25:46**). During our lives we are told by the Lord we will be called upon to give an account of the things we have done with life (**2 Cor. 5:10**). Similarly we are promised His blessings if we respond to His call by way of the gospel (**2 Thess. 2:13,14; Rom. 1:16**). The story of the death of the Son of God (**Rom. 5:6-11**) to redeem the sinner (**Rom. 3:23; Col. 1:13,14**) is told over and over. We are challenged to choose between those things temporal and those things eternal (**1 John 2:15-17**). By the revelation of the mind of God, the opportunity to spend eternity with Him as a reward for choosing that which is eternal, is made clear in His word (**Rom. 8:16-18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18**). God, then will determine by our choices who is listed in the Book of Life (**Rev. 20:15**), and judgment will be made accordingly by Jesus the Christ (**Acts 17:31**). As much as God rewards the faithful with a blissful existence in His presence (**Rev. 21:1-5**), He will equally punish those who disregarded His message (**Mark 9:42-48**).

Our life, then our death will determine our eternal existence

It is then, that we see the choices we have made in life determining our eternal existence. In the story of Lazarus and the rich man, Lazarus is comforted in the arms of Abraham, while the rich man is busy unsuccessfully negotiating relief from the torment he feels as he awaits his final punishment in an eternal hell of fire and brimstone. Immediately, he pleaded for Lazarus to come and give relief to his burning tongue. At this point Abraham explains to him his chosen lifestyle prior to death produced his current situation and further, there was a great gulf or chasm between he and Lazarus and no one could cross it. It is at this point he begins to think of others still living and begs for someone to go to his brothers to warn them about this place. The answer is ironic as he is told, *they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.*

The beauty of the gospel message is that while we live we have choices to be made. And there is a very persuasive reason for us to choose to follow the Savior by obeying His commands, for, you see, Someone did rise from the dead to bring this message of salvation to us.

Don't you think now, while you still live is the very time you should choose to accept this risen Savior so He may accept you in the day of judgment that is promised to us all?

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

John Humphries

We are to understand that is God is all good (and He is) and that He is all powerful (and He is), then evil (sickness, accidents, all forms of human suffering, etc.) should not exist. But evil exists in all of its terrible manifestations, therefore, God (all powerful and all good) does not exist. The Bible is very clear that God is all good and all powerful (**Pss. 34:8; 100:5; 119:68; 145:9; and Pss. 90:2; 147:5; Isa. 40:28; Jer. 32:17; Rev. 19:6**). But the argument that this should mean that evil should not exist is pure human assumption and ignorance. It fails to take into consideration all of the facts. Instead of checking with the Bible, these skeptics become god-makers and determine what their god should or should not do. This is idolatry. Their god is too small and is not the God of the Bible.

Unfortunately, this sophistry is very popular, but is a false argument.

First of all, God created us with the ability to make choices. He did not make human robots without free will. No! God desires for humanity to respect, seek, love, and obey Him (**Acts 17:26-28; Heb. 11:6**). This results in peace with ourselves, with others, and with God (**Eph. 2:14**). But many, instead, make bad choices that cause much human suffering (disagreements that turn violent, crime, wars, etc.). This is humanity's failings, inspired by the devil, and not God's fault. These bad choices often involve violations of God's will. This makes one a sinner before God. But we also need to understand that we all fall short of His glory and are guilty of transgression (**Rom. 3:23**). We do not always choose to think, say, or do the thing that pleases the Heavenly Father. Don't blame Adam, because we all have sinned (**Rom. 5:12**).

The sin problem is why God cursed the earth with hardships for men and women (**Gen. 3:16-19**). It takes much effort to work the earth and bring food from the soil to the table. This challenge to subdue the earth and obtain its blessings apply throughout man's attempts to dig the ore or grow the food that is needed to sustain life on the planet. Many farmers experience failure because of a cursed earth. Human sin set this in motion long ago! Because of sin, we lost the garden of Eden!

Also, painful accidents occur when people make wrong decisions through carelessness, distraction, ignorance, haste, anger, etc. Car wrecks, air plane crashes, equipment injuries, falls, are just a few of the painful, and sometimes fatal, accidents that cause suffering when people make wrong choices. Innocent people often suffer along with, or because of, the person making the wrong choice. For example, the bus driver falls asleep wrecking the bus causing fatalities and painful injuries. Many examples could be given. This is man-caused suffering.

There is also the reality of God "*giving us up*" to the painful after-effects and bitter fruit of our sinful conduct (**Rom. 1:24, 24, 28, 32**). Sin has serious, painful consequences. We are not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but we know that nations that forget God and plunge deeper and deeper into sin are headed for serious trouble as God gives us up to our

own ungodly devices that bring fearful, painful consequences (**Ps. 9:17; Prov. 14:34**). Sin is a painful scourge to society!

A very important part of this issue concerning suffering involves the fact that God also knows that we need the chastening and maturing effect that trials and tribulations (that are endured by His faithful) bring to our spirituality (**Rom. 5:3-5; Heb. 12:3-11; Jas. 1:2-4; 2 Cor. 12:7-10**). In overcoming the evil and suffering that is all about us and with us, we draw closer to God and lean more and more upon His grace to sustain us in our time of need. Suffering successfully endured is a soul-building experience for God's faithful children.

Mark 15.1–15

Three types of sinners

Those who sin against conscience

Pilate falls into this category. Mark doesn't, but other Gospels tell us Pilate publicly and plainly declared Jesus innocent of the charges against Him (**Jn. 18:38; 19:4,6**). Mark does indicate the various attempts Pilate made to deliver Christ. But contrary to actions guided by his reason and conscience, Pilate ignored his conscience and the law to allow Christ to be crucified.

At the beginning, sinning against your conscience is hard to do. Pilate found this out when his better nature struggled against the crowd's cry of *"Crucify Him!"* (**15.13**). His desire to not antagonize the Jews (**15.15**) and his dread of Caesar (**Jn. 19.12**) were greater than his conscience and he folded like a cheap suit. I'm guessing the next time he had a crisis of conscience, he had a much easier time ignoring what his conscience was telling him.

Those who sin from conviction

I wouldn't be surprised to know that some of the Jews who pressed for Christ's death did so out of conviction. Believing Jesus a blasphemer, they would have believed they were being obedient to Deuteronomy **18.20** in seeking His death. Had Paul been present, he certainly would have been a Jew who opposed Christ out of conviction. He thought he should do many things that were contrary to the name of Jesus (**Acts 26.9**).

While there is no true religion without sincerity, there can be sincerity without true religion. It's not enough for a man to believe he's in the right; heathens, heretics, and inquisitors can all believe they're in the

right. What the Bible says, not what we think, is the ultimate arbiter for determining what's right.

Those who sin without conviction

The false witnesses (**14.56**) and the soldiers who mocked and beat the Lord are here. They seemed free of any moral scruples relating to the role they played in the attempt to get Christ. They were lapdogs, thoughtless underlings who willingly killed off their conscience in order to do violence to Christ. The business and political worlds are full of people like this. Usually, a love of money is where they start (**1 Tim. 6.10**), and in the furtherance of this idolatry (**Col 3.5**) they grasp at nearly every deceptive, crooked, unconscionable opportunity that comes along.

These three great classes of sinners present a sick picture of this wicked world.

Kenny Chumbley

A Growing Church

An elder called on a member of the church for a social visit. The conversation turned to the work of the church. They talked of the progress that had been made and how the Lord had blessed their efforts through the past years. Yet both agreed that other things were needed. "It seems to me," said the member, "That the church is always needing something. Every time we meet, there is a plea for more giving and more workers."

"You are right, my brother," replied the elder. "The church is always needing something. I had a little boy who needed something. One week it was shoes, another clothes, then lunch money, bus fare, spending money. I thought he asked too much. He hasn't asked for anything for years now. He quit needing anything from me. You see, he died one night. And there are times when I would give anything to hear him ask for something just once more. I realized after it was too late, how much happiness I found, even in his begging. Perhaps you have never missed the church. It has always been there when you needed it, and you have taken it for granted. Frankly I confess I did not know how little I did for my son until it was too late.

So it is with the church. As long as the church stands, it will have needs. When it quits needing something, it will be dead. A dead church cannot offer a living hope to a dying world. The church that has no needs fills none."

Author unknown

Psalm 1:1 ~ Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: ² But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; and on his law doth he meditate day and night. ³ And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also doth not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. ⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. ⁶ For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the wicked shall perish.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

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- Sunday A.M. ~ 10:00 Assembled Worship
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- **Visitors welcome**
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*“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi,
with the bishops and deacons:”*

Philippians 1:1

NEWS AND NOTES:

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WEDNESDAY 7 PM - JIM STAUFFER

MINOR PROPHETS

SUNDAY SERMON: THE WHOLE

COUNSEL OF GOD



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- **Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17
- **Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6
- **Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30
- **Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10
- **Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38
- **Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10